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Science Fiction

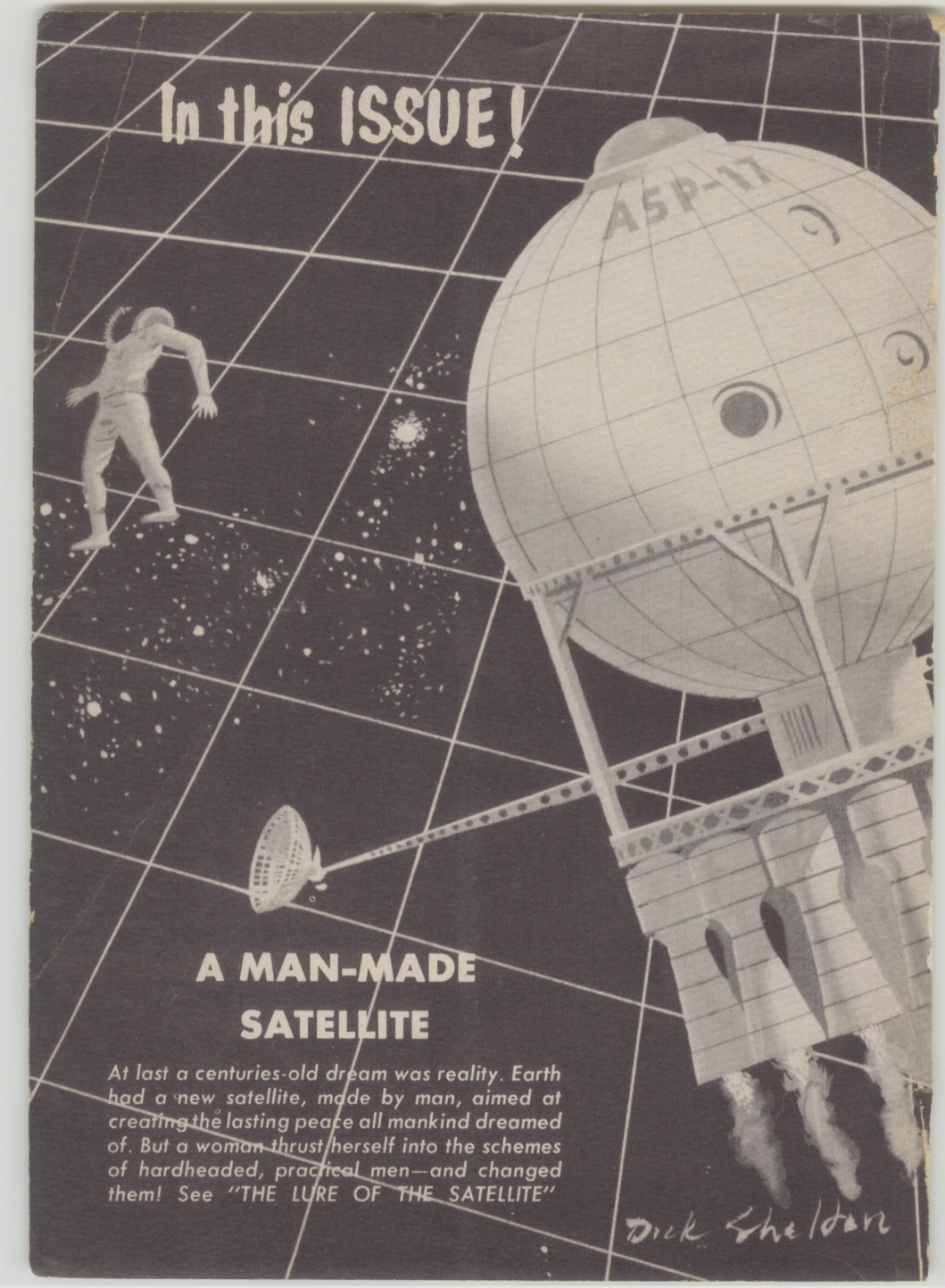
THE FIRST TWO-
HEADED MAN

by Richard Shaver



Bryce Walton, Roger Dee,
Mack Reynolds, Alan E. Nourse

No. 3 • 35¢



In this ISSUE!

A MAN-MADE SATELLITE

At last a centuries-old dream was reality. Earth had a new satellite, made by man, aimed at creating the lasting peace all mankind dreamed of. But a woman thrust herself into the schemes of hardheaded, practical men—and changed them! See "THE LURE OF THE SATELLITE"

Dick Sheldon

ORBIT

THE BEST IN

Science Fiction

Volume 1, No. 3

MORRIS S. LATZEN
Publisher

JULES SALTMAN, Editor

BERNARD GORDON, Art Director

ORBIT is published bi-monthly by Hanro Corp. Office of publication: 441 Lexington Ave., New York 17, N. Y. Application for second-class entry pending at post office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879. Additional entry at Silver Spring, Md. Copyright 1954 by Hanro Corp. Volume 1, Number 3. July-August, 1954. 35¢ per copy. Subscriptions: \$1.25 per year, Canada \$1.75, foreign \$2.00. Not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts. Printed in the U. S. A. Nationally distributed by the American News Company.

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A STERLING PUBLICATION

The LURE of the

by George R. Price



AT FOUR IN the morning Major John Redfield was awakened by rough shaking. "Today," he was told. "You're leaving today." He quickly dressed, packed a few belongings, and wrote a short letter to his wife.

At five, he and Colonel Cunningham were called in for a final briefing by General Moseley, the senior Operations Research officer. "We want you to understand exactly why we're timing things this way," General Moseley said. "We estimate that rocket's about ninety per cent safe right now. You'll have nine chances out of ten of getting up there alive. But if we wait four weeks we can make the mission ninety-eight per cent safe. Here's a curve."

He showed them a graph on which a curve rose from left to right.

"That's safety plotted against time. The longer you wait, the more bugs we get out of the rocket. But here's another curve. This shows the probability that Eurasia will start something if we wait."

Redfield examined the graph carefully. "Thirty per cent probability that Eurasia will act within a week. Is war that close?"

HE MIGHT HAVE BROUGHT PEACE ON EARTH . . . BUT FOR HER . . .

SATELLITE

Moseley nodded. "It is—if we don't act first. Of course, once you're up there, they won't dare start a war until they've neutralized our advantage. So here's a final curve. We've lumped everything together and plotted estimated benefit to the Alliance against time. The peak is today. That's why you're going up before the rocket's really finished."

"It's strange," Redfield said, "but I don't feel worried at all. I have such intense hate for Eurasia that more than anything else in the world I want a chance to strike out against them. I had a friend once. They held him prisoner for two years. Then they let him go."

"I know," Moseley said. "I've seen some of those cases, though I wish to God I hadn't. It's unbelievable that a human being could live through something like that."

"What frightens me," Cunningham said, "aren't the ones who have been physically tortured. It's the ones that come back in perfect health without a single mark anywhere on their bodies—nothing changed but their minds."

"Good," said Moseley. "You each have strong personal motivations. Now, the way I look at your mission is this. Our struggle is a conflict between technology and psychology.

We're far ahead of Eurasia in science and engineering, and they're far ahead of us in propaganda, espionage, and torture. So far, their psychology has been beating our technology all hollow. But here's where we even the score. Once you're up there in space, there isn't a damn thing to stop you from seeing everything that happens in Eurasia. We'll be able to strike at them, and they won't be able to strike back. Their only chance then will be to get a space station themselves, but in four months we'll have two more rockets up there that will be armed. So these next months are crucial. This will be the best chance we've ever had to neutralize their threat. The whole future of the Alliance may depend on what you do. Don't fail."

At noon they took off from the Florida base, and an hour later they were a thousand miles in the sky. They floated around the world in a roughly north-south orbit, making one revolution every two hours, while the world rotated below them from west to east at its twenty-four-hour rate. The plane of their orbit included the sun, so that they crossed the equator near noon and midnight.

The ascent had been uneventful except for the strange new feeling of

weightlessness during the periods when they coasted with the motors off. At first they found this pleasant and soothing, but after a few minutes it became dizzying and both men hastily swallowed capsules of Vertamine. By the time the rocket was fully established in its orbit, the vertigo had decreased and become bearable. But Redfield still had a mild sensation that his head was slowly swimming around.

Their one room was a cylinder fifteen feet long and nine feet in diameter, with more than a third of the space packed with complex electronic and optical instruments. The axis of the cylinder was along their direction of motion, and the side that faced the earth they automatically thought of as down. Their food for the next four months would be dehydrated emergency rations, their air would be regenerated by algae growing in tanks on the sunlit side of the rocket, and they would sleep in shifts in a dark ventilated bag suspended along the axis of the cylinder.

Redfield moved to the down side, stepping along the hull with the aid of magnetized shoes. He brought his face close to a window. Everything directly below him was dark, blending into twilight in the Arctic far toward his feet. Here and there he could make out tiny patches of light. Cities. They were passing over the mysterious, hated land of the enemy, and he imagined below him the concentration camps, the millions of

slave laborers, the torture chambers.

How gigantic and how terrifying it was! It covered all of continental Asia except Turkey and the tip of Korea, plus part of Africa and more than half of Europe. All his life it had been growing. He remembered the consternation when India was absorbed, the panic of the refugees from Israel, the feeling of shame and defeat when Berlin was abandoned, and the sudden, almost bloodless seizure of Yugoslavia. Country after country had fallen to Eurasia and almost all of them without fighting.

He moved to a viewing screen and adjusted the controls of an infra-red telescope. A city of huge, squat buildings appeared on the screen in white, phosphorescent lines. On the wall beside the screen a detailed map was projected, with cross hairs automatically showing the point being studied through the telescope. He found he was looking at the great Eurasian espionage center near Khoshak in Outer Mongolia. Undoubtedly, there in some of the buildings shown on the screen, men were even then studying the rocket with telescopes and radar, measuring its size, plotting its course. He looked back at the screen. As he watched, the view slowly changed. The telescope was held on one point automatically, but the direction from which he looked was altering.

He returned to the window. The world was drifting below him at an incredible rate. Khoshak had moved

back toward his feet. To his left was the dark patch of the Gobi Desert, with cities on all sides of it. Presently he was passing over Tibet, with the Himalayas a misty white under the moonlight. Then Nepal and Bhutan. Pakistan. The lights of Calcutta. The blackness of the Bay of Bengal. And finally the Indian Ocean. At the left, he could see Sumatra, Java, and part of Borneo, and at the extreme left the edge of Australia came into view.

He looked up. Cunningham was methodically checking instruments. Redfield looked back down through the window. "It's unbelievable," he said. "It moves so swiftly and yet so slowly. It's as though the day were only two hours long. I'm dizzy again. I don't know whether it's from just watching the earth or from the weightlessness."

"Go easy on the Vertamine," Cunningham said. "Remember, there are side reactions if you take too much. Now help me into my space suit. I want to make a quick check of the outside. After we pass into the sunlight there'll be too much heat and glare for comfort."

Redfield helped him into the bulky suit, and Cunningham disappeared into the air lock in the forward end of the cylinder. Presently Redfield saw him hovering at a window peering in; a light turned on his face produced a strange ghostly effect. Then Cunningham was off, moving around the rocket, and every

now and then Redfield could catch a glimpse of the light.

He returned to the window on the earth side. They were still over the Indian Ocean, approaching the Antarctic Ocean. Kerguelen Island and McDonald Island on the right. Then Antarctica, white in the moonlight. And at last the sun, rising over Antarctica with bewildering speed. At first it was a deep red, as though seen through a smoke-filled sky. And then almost within seconds it had become a dazzling blue white. He moved to a side window and looked out into the black, starry sky. As he watched he felt the rocket shake very slightly, and seconds later Cunningham floated past, about thirty feet from the window, drifting slowly. Sunlight sparkled on his spacesuit. It dawned on Redfield that something was wrong. The spacesuit gaped open in the front, and he could see Cunningham's chest burnt black. He watched, stunned, until the body passed out of view, and then for a long time he followed it through one of the external television viewers. Cunningham had become a new satellite, following an orbit almost parallel to the rocket's, but moving away from it at the rate of about a half mile a day.

What had happened? Eurasian sabotage? He grew weak with terror at the thought that Eurasia had reached them even there. Finally he managed to reason himself out of the panic. What had undoubtedly

happened was that the sun had blinded Cunningham, and somehow he had accidentally ignited some unexploded fuel, which had burned through his spacesuit. That was it.

With Cunningham's death, the nightmare began. It built up gradually, but within less than twenty-four hours Redfield had the feeling that he was rapidly going insane. It was as though he were being slowly whirled around in a giant centrifuge while relentless voices shouted commands and questions at him incessantly. Partly it was the loneliness and fear. Partly it was the drug. But mostly it was dizziness and exhaustion. The day was only two hours long and there was no chance to sleep for more than a few minutes at a time. Around and around he went. Sakhalin and Tasmania, Cape Horn and Cape Parry, Everest and Aconcagua. And everywhere he went, there was work to be done. Observe weather conditions over Antarctica. How heavy was the traffic through Kara Strait? Guide rockets by radio control to targets in the Gibson Desert. Photograph the solar corona. Study the far ultraviolet spectrum of Denebola and Vega.

At times he felt that days were passing rapidly by the scores. Every two-hour revolution was another day. He would dazedly watch the computer clock that showed local earth time. First it moved at a slow, regular pace. A little before noon,

noon, a little after noon. And then it would pick up speed. One p.m., two, three, four. And then five, six, and seven would come only two or three minutes apart, so that the minute hand would seem like the second hand. Then the clock would gradually slow down, until near midnight time would be changing again at a proper rate.

And at other times it would seem that there was only one single long day stretching endlessly into the future. On the television screen, questioners faced him in rotation. There would be Major Brien starting in, crisp and efficient. After four revolutions, he would be replaced by Major Thomas. Four more revolutions, and Colonel Minnick would appear. Minnick would work through eight hours, and leave a little tired, and then Major Brien would be back, fresh and rested.

It was like being in a Eurasian torture chamber. All the ingredients were present. The drug. The strange surroundings. The fear. The steadily increasing exhaustion. The relays of questioners. Gradually a change occurred in his orientation. The great mass of Eurasia was no longer hostile. It was friendly. It meant restful silence. The nagging radio beams could not reach him there. He could make his observations in peace, and now and then doze for a few minutes.

There was no end to it. It would be four months before relief came. He counted the days. June 4, 5, 6, 7,

8, 9, 10. Only six days and already he was near cracking. He got a few minutes of restless sleep over Antarctica, and then a voice beam from the South Shetland Islands picked him up. Major Brien's crisp, slightly high-pitched voice: Describe cloud formations, wind velocities and directions in Antarctica. Had he yet gotten around to photographing the infrared spectrum of Pictoris? No? That was unfortunate; Professor Throckmorton was growing impatient.

Then the beam shifted to Gallejos at the southern tip of Argentina, and now there was television coverage. He would see Major Brien's freshly pressed green uniform, his neat brown mustache, his slick, black hair carefully plastered into place. What a contrast to his own haggard, exhausted appearance! He was glad that the rocket had only a facsimile transmitter—not a television one. Major Brien could not see him.

All the way up through South America, the West Indies and the eastern part of North America, the beam followed him. Most of the time he was talking to Major Brien. One question after another. Endless instructions. Military observations to make in Eurasia. Radio propagation studies. Cosmic ray measurements. Over Quebec the scene shifted, and for ten minutes he had to listen to Dr. Ambrose, who looked like a very young and exceptionally

intelligent freshman. Ambrose had a pimply face, thick, horn-rimmed glasses, and a childish serious expression. Redfield disliked all his interrogators, but Ambrose most of all. He was the special assistant of Professor Throckmorton, the president of the National Academy of Sciences, and he showed very plainly that he considered Redfield to be an incompetent nitwit. Now he was arguing sarcastically that the spectral data Redfield had furnished for Tauri were obviously in error, and that no doubt Redfield had made the absurd mistake of photographing the wrong star. Then Major Brien was back, and all the way up over Baffin and Devon Islands, Redfield was briefed on the observations to be made in the polar region and Eurasia. Television linkage stopped at Cape Wolsstenholme, and from there on there was just the sharp, irritating voice.

Finally, just before the beam cut off, came a short pep talk from General Brundage, Commander in Chief of Rocket Operations. "Pull yourself together, Redfield. Remember that the whole future of the Alliance depends on you. It's unfortunate that you're alone, but you've got to make the best of it and work twice as hard. Of course you get tired. You've got to expect to get tired. Think of the infantry fighting the guerillas in Ethiopia right now. They're frequently on the go three or four days and nights straight. Think of your comrades slaving in the concentra-

tion camps. Sixteen or eighteen hours of hard labor every day, until they die from exhaustion. You've got plenty of chance to sleep in between observations. You've got to learn to catnap. Come on now. Pull yourself together. Let's see you start acting like a man instead of an hysterical woman."

All the way over the Pole, Redfield burned with anger. Act like a man—indeed. That paunchy, swell-headed, insolent bastard working an eight-hour day! It wouldn't make him so mad if he were just being used for military observation and rocket guiding, but half his time was taken gathering data for private research projects. It seemed that every astronomer in the Alliance was clamoring to get his pet theory tested. They were trying to force on to him all the observations they'd been wanting to make for years but couldn't make because of the light absorbed by the atmosphere. Professor Throckmorton and Sir John Beverly, the Astronomer Royal, were the worst. They were feuding over their rival theories of stellar spectra, and because of their high positions they got the lion's share of his time. So he should pull himself together! Well, some of the Alliance officers should pull themselves together and learn how to say "no" to the scientists. After all, it wasn't going to kill them to wait a little longer for their damned data.

Over Eurasia he relaxed. How

beautiful it was. How quiet. The enormous, silent country. No Major Brien. No Dr. Ambrose. No General Brundage. Just silence. It was almost noon, and he passed over vast fields green with wheat. The Great Siberian Plain. And then the mountains began. The Sayan Mountains. The Great Altai Mountains. And ahead lay the Kunluns, and finally the Himalayas. But suddenly the silence was broken. From the loudspeaker came a man's voice, speaking English, a little high in pitch, and with a slightly British accent. It started right in the middle of a sentence: "—twenty-four thread line. A bit of a disappointment, you know. And then I had a similar experience once at Cape San Lucas."

Redfield grew cold with fright. There could be only one meaning. It was the Eurasian Secret Police, the dreaded ARSU. He had an impulse to snap off the radio, but he hesitated, to see what would come next.

"Really, though," the strange, British voice continued, "the place to have a try at it is Chile. Off Tocopilla is my favorite. One day there I got five strikes and caught them all."

It had puzzled him for an instant, but suddenly he caught on. The man was talking about fishing. It was all clear now, and Redfield was no longer afraid. The ARSU had made an error. It was Cunningham who was interested in fishing. He himself did almost no fishing. His inter-

ests were hiking and hunting. Clearly the ARSU hadn't learned that Cunningham was dead. He decided they weren't so clever after all, so it would be safe to listen.

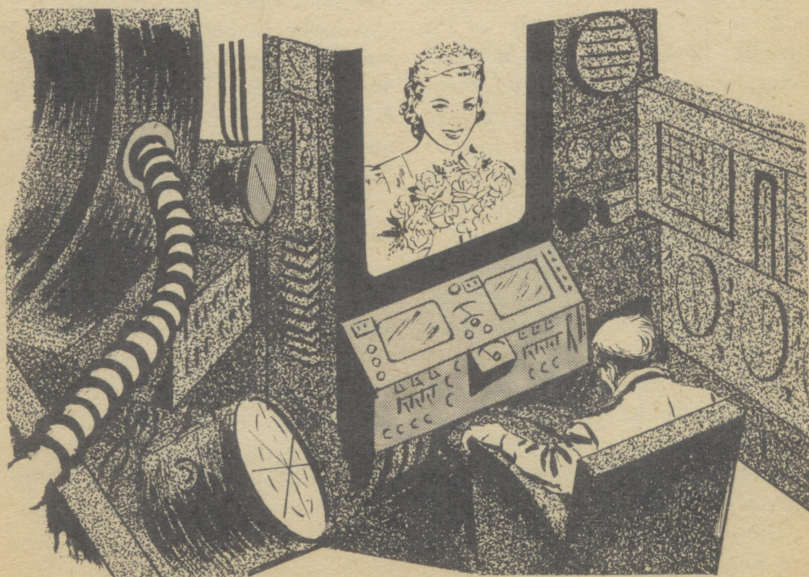
For about ten minutes the voice continued, describing fishing for marlin, swordfish, and shark in the South Pacific, and then it abruptly faded away. Redfield noticed that the diversion had soothed him. He wasn't quite as exhausted as before.

On each of his next trips over Eurasia, he hopefully awaited the voice—but there was nothing. Finally, twenty-six hours later, as he was passing over the Kirghiz Steppe between the Caspian Sea and Lake Aral, it came on again for a few minutes. This time it was telling an ex-

citing story about almost being swept over Victoria Falls while fishing for tigerfish on the Zambesi. Redfield decided that the next time he heard it, he would answer.

The next time was about eight hours later, passing over Manchuria at midnight. Now the voice was comparing the alligator gar of Florida with the arapaima of the Amazon. At the first pause, Redfield cut in, beginning abruptly as the other had: "I was only eighteen when I got my first grizzly. I've done quite a lot of hunting since then, but I've never had a thrill to match that. It was a damn sight bigger than your marlins or gars or swordfish."

"Yes," said the voice, "I had a bit of a time with a grizzly once myself.



They can be rather tough beggars. Kodiak bears give you a bit of sport also, but I rather prefer the grizzly country for scenery and climate. Colorado is a really lovely state."

From then on, whenever he heard the man, they talked about hunting. He learned that the man's name was Peters, and apparently he had hunted all over the world: tigers in Nepal, elephants in the Congo, caribou in Alaska. He would pick up Peters's beam here and there over Eurasia, and chat with him while he made his observations. There was never any discussion of anything military, so he did not see why he had to tell anyone about Peters. It was medicinal to him—soothed him and calmed him so that he could sleep in odd moments. He looked forward to these talks as the one bright part of his life. But he knew it could not last. Peters was of the ARSU, and someday something was going to happen.

And one day it happened. Instead of Peters there was a woman on, a woman with a contralto voice who spoke English with a slight, exotic accent. He started to switch off the receiver, but then he changed his mind. After all, what harm could the ARSU possibly do him? Why, if anything, they helped him. If it hadn't been for the relaxation of talking with Peters, he probably would long ago have told Brundage and the rest to go to hell.

The woman told him her name was Sonya. She was a ballerina, twenty-

two years old. She had recently been performing in Moscow, but now was vacationing in a cottage on the Caspian Sea. Peters was her uncle. He was a mining engineer and he had suddenly left for the Tungus Peninsula where rich deposits of platinum had been found.

A fable, Redfield told himself. She, like Peters, was a member of the ARSU. She must be about thirty. He pictured her with long, black hair, slanting eyes, dressed in a brocaded gown. She probably had a heart of stone that could rejoice in torture.

But he talked with her anyway, as he had talked with Peters. There was no more discussion of fishing or hunting. Instead, she told him about her childhood; how both her parents had died when she was little, and she spoke of her present life as a ballerina. She described the cottage and the view southward over the Caspian Sea, and they discussed the flowers she was growing by the cottage.

The days passed. It was nearly the end of June, and he had settled into a steady state. He made his observations automatically, talked automatically to Brien, Minnick, Thomas, and the others. He tried to think as little as possible—to use only a fraction of his brain. He was all the time so nearly asleep that the transition to full sleep was easy. He could doze off in a moment as he stood in front of an instrument, and then wake up again minutes later. He

could fall asleep in the midst of one of General Brundage's lectures, and awake before it was over. Only when he was talking to Sonya did he come really alive. She was the one real thing. Everything else—his wife, his children, the Alliance—were blurred and distant.

What would the next step be? There had been no talk between them of anything of military importance. But there had to be another step sometime. Then it became clear to him. The next step was to see her.

"I would like to see you, Sonya," he said.

"I think it can be managed, John," she answered.

And the next time around, it was. It was a little before noon over the Caspian Sea. First her voice came, and then seconds later her image began to form on the television screen. He sucked in his breath sharply. In some ways, she was as he had expected, but in other ways she was very different. She was tall and graceful and strikingly beautiful as though she were really a ballerina, but her long hair was flaxen instead of black and her eyes a light golden brown, just a shade darker than her hair. Her complexion was very fair, and she had no make-up other than lipstick. She was wearing a simple print dress with a pattern of small flowers on a white background, and she was sitting on a well cared-for lawn, her legs tucked under the dress, her face tilted upward toward him, smiling

and squinting a little from the sun. Just behind her was a flower garden against the white wall of a small house. There was something strangely gentle and shy about her. She seemed to combine the freshness and sweetness of an American high school girl with the mature charm of an exotically beautiful woman.

She continued as she had been, chatting gaily and unaffectedly in her soft, low voice, talking about flowers, and picnics by the sea, and ballet. He spoke very little, only answering when she questioned him directly. Mostly he just stared at her in wonder. He felt there was nothing at all that could be changed about her to improve her beauty. Everything was perfect. He had never seen a woman like her before, but he felt that she was what he had been wanting all his life. His own wife seemed far away and faded, like a flower pressed between the leaves of an old book.

At the end, just before the beam cut off, he spoke to her. "You are very beautiful, Sonya."

She blushed deeply and lowered her eyes, saying nothing. And her image slowly dissolved.

All the way down through the Indian Ocean and over the Antarctic, he thought about her. What was she really? And yet it was plain what she was. She was a snare. She was the greatest production of the Eurasian theatre. It was easy to imagine. The leading Eurasian psychologists,

playwrights, directors, scenic designers, lighting experts had been called together and set to work on the most important task of their careers. Everything they could learn about his life, everything he had said to Peters or Sonya, was being studied day and night by panels of experts. They had chosen the leading actress in Eurasia to present the play to its audience of one, and everything she did—the way she sat, the dress she wore, her accent, her blush—was studied, practiced, and utterly false.

But when he saw her again, it was impossible to believe that everything about her was false. Certainly what she did must be planned and programmed, but she herself must really be as she seemed. She was sitting on a sofa in what was evidently the living room of the cottage. It was a room such as he had seen a hundred times in America, neat, homey, cheerful. She had changed to a dress of russet brown with a pleated skirt that draped gracefully over the green fabric of the sofa. "You are beautiful, Sonya," he said to her again.

This time she did not blush, but she again lowered her eyes for an instant.

"Thank you, John."

Then she raised her eyes. "And you—can I see you?"

"No," he said, "I have no television transmitter here."

He was glad that he had none, for he looked hideous: tired and emaciated with a heavy growth of beard.

"Ah," she said, "but I know how you look anyway."

She stepped to the mantle and picked up a framed portrait. It showed him dressed in a civilian suit of dark blue. She looked at it. "I think you are a very handsome man, John."

Where had they gotten this picture? When had he had such a suit? The picture showed him at his present age, yet he had not worn civilian clothes for at least eight years. So it had been faked. But why? Why did they want to show him in civilian clothes?

Through many more of the little two-hour days, he kept on as he had been, acting automatically and half asleep while he did his work, and coming to life only when he talked to Sonya and watched her. He saw her at all times of the day. He watched her as she breakfasted, visited her intermittently through the day, and looked on late in the evening as she combed out her long flaxen hair in her bedroom. Once he accompanied her as she went walking along the coast of the Caspian Sea. It was a rugged, rocky coast, with little patches of sandy beach here and there. A strong wind came in across the sea from the south, and white capped breakers beat against the shore. And another time he went walking with her through meadows under the full moon.

And yet he knew that it was all

illusion. At the very least there must be a camera and a microphone and a crew of two or three with her at all times. Why were they doing this? Didn't they realize how obvious it must be to him?

One day he asked her to show him through the cottage. She walked gracefully through the different rooms, and presently they came to one that he had not known about before. It was a small room, almost empty, but with gaily printed linoleum on the floor and cheerful, golden yellow curtains.

"This is the nursery," she said shyly.

And all at once he understood. This was no deception. This was a bribe. A bribe being offered to him with infinite caution and delicacy, but still a bribe, pure and simple. The Eurasians had studied him carefully until they understood him better than he understood himself. Somehow they had learned what sort of woman would attract him most, and they had searched among the hundreds of millions in Eurasia and found her. They knew what sort of home he would like to live in, and in what sort of surroundings. They had created here the land of his dreams. The cottage was to be his cottage. The blue civilian suit was probably even now hanging in one of the closets waiting for him. Sonya was to be his wife, and the nursery was for the children she would bear him.

There was something he had to

say to her. For a long time he had been wanting to say it. Just as the beam was about to be cut off, he told her.

"I love you, Sonya."

He told her this again each time that he passed over Eurasia, and the first two times she said nothing, but the third time she looked toward him shyly, diffidently. "I think I love you, too."

Now it was settled. The die was cast, the Rubicon crossed. What would come next? What task would she set him to prove his love? He waited, but there was nothing. She was sitting at her vanity, combing her hair, humming a little, and talking about twin girls who had just been born to a neighbor.

"Sonya," he said, "would you sing to me?"

"Gladly, John."

She sang a strange, melodious Eurasian song he had never heard before. It was exotically beautiful, perfectly sung.

"And do you know any songs in English?"

She turned her head from the mirror and smiled at him affectionately:

"Just a song at twilight, when
the lights are low,
And the flick'ring shadows
softly come and go;
Though the heart be weary, sad
the day and long,
Still to us at twilight comes
love's old song,
Comes love's old, sweet
song."

Long after the beam had cut off, the words of her song went echoing and re-echoing through his brain.

Now she was asleep. For eight hours, through four weary circuits of the world he would see her no more. His mind closed away, and he began to go through his somnambulist motions.

And then suddenly he was wide awake. On the television screen he saw the horrified face of General Brundage, and he felt a terrible certainty that he had been talking in his sleep—talking about Sonya. The screen went blank.

For all the rest of his circuit over Alliance territory there was blankness and silence. Then silence over Eurasia, for Sonya slept. Silence again over the Alliance—and then all at once the screen came to life and he was looking at the enraged face of General Somerset, Commander in Chief of the Alliance Air Force, six stars gleaming on each shoulder.

"Major Redfield!"

He quivered with terror. The nightmare was coming to its climax.

"Yes, sir."

"Who is Sonya?"

What could he say?

"I command you to answer me."

There was nothing he could say.

"You have been in communication with the enemy—have you not?"

"I have not communicated anything of military significance," he said finally.

The stern, massive face grew dark red. "You have committed treason, Major Redfield. You will be court martialed, publicly humiliated, and shot. This is the most infamous betrayal in the history of the Alliance. You were given the greatest trust and responsibility that a man ever had, and you failed it utterly. Traitor. Dupe of the ARSU. Your wife and children will change their surname to escape the disgrace you have cast upon them. I myself will command the firing squad that shoots you." A huge clenched fist was shaken at him. "Traitor."

The screen went blank, and again there was silence over the whole world.

For a long time he floated in a sort of trance, and then he found himself talking to Sonya again, telling her what had happened. She listened sympathetically. "I would like to kill General Somerset," he said. "How can I kill him?"

"I don't know," she said. "I will find out."

And the next time over Eurasia, she was telling him. A rocket with an atomic warhead would be fired from Eurasian territory. It would have the same type of radio control system as the Alliance rockets. He would pick it up on the opposite side of the world and guide it to the great Florida base, where General Somerset had his headquarters and where two more satellite rockets were being readied.

"I will do this," he said.

Once more he dozed, but he was awakened by a voice from the radio, and he recognized the friendly, cultured face of Dr. Roderico, Secretary General of the Alliance. The famous diplomat was talking to him in a pleasant, casual way. One must make allowances for General Somerset, he was saying. A fine man, but a bit too quick-tempered. Redfield should ignore what had been said. Dr. Roderico smiled charmingly.

"A rocket is coming," Redfield said. "I am guiding a rocket to Florida. It contains a hydrogen bomb."

Dr. Roderico raised his eyebrows slightly. "But of course. One understands how such things happen. But what we must do is to return it to its source. It takes only a trifle more fuel to send it all the way around the world than to send it halfway around. It is very simple. It will start no war, for we are only returning to Eurasia what they send to us. I shall transfer you to a computing center. Only do this thing for us, and all will be forgiven. Make the rocket destroy Khoshak, and you will be promoted to full colonel." He smiled again and was gone.

Now Redfield was talking to a brisk, business-like man in shirt sleeves and vest. Mechanically he obeyed the directions given him. He located the Eurasian rocket near Bermuda and described its coordinates to the man, who made quick jabs at a keyboard, waited a few seconds,

and then gave precise instructions for altering the rocket's course. For several minutes Redfield continued to observe the rocket's position, and the computer operator described new corrections.

Then a new face appeared on the screen. A three-star general, with his insignia identifying him as in Intelligence. He spoke rapidly and earnestly. "Sonya has been identified as Magda Turovoi. She is the wife of the chief of ARSU. She has two children, and holds the Order of Eurasia, First Class, for previous espionage. She broadcasts to you from the espionage center of Khoshak."

"It is impossible," Redfield said. "You are deceiving me. What does this Magda Turovoi look like?"

"Twenty-nine years old, tall, black hair, olive complexion, dark brown eyes. But appearance can be altered. No doubt she looks different to you."

"The color of the eyes can't be changed," Redfield insisted.

"Of course it can. An injection of pigment into the iris. We do it routinely."

"But the light would be wrong if she were at Khoshak. The sun position is two and a half hours different from that at the Caspian Sea."

"The lighting is artificial; she broadcasts from indoors," the general said flatly. "Look, here is the proof that she is at Khoshak. Guide the rocket back to Khoshak and inform her just before you explode it. You will see how she reacts. Her

fear will make it plain to you that she is right there, and not on the Caspian Sea. Our information is absolutely reliable. Now, good luck. We will be informed promptly when you destroy Khoshak, and within two minutes your promotion order will be signed."

What was he to believe? Magda or Sonya? But in either case he could destroy Khoshak. If she had deceived him then he wanted to kill her. And if she were really Sonya and on the Caspian Sea, then she would not be harmed.

But if she were really Sonya and he destroyed Khoshak, then he would lose her forever. If only he had time to think! But there was no time. He was moving relentlessly on, already sweeping across the plains of Siberia. Far to the left the rocket was shooting toward him. He located it through a telescope. Already it was within range of his control beam. He began to steer it down, zeroing it on Khoshak.

Now she was talking to him. She was standing outdoors beside the cottage, looking at him intently with a deeply serious expression.

"What happened, John? Did something go wrong?"

"Nothing went wrong," he said coldly. "The rocket is coming back. In two minutes I will destroy Khoshak—Magda."

He watched her face closely. For an instant there was an expression of shock and disbelief, and then she

had turned away from him and was leaning against the cottage wall, her body shaking, her face buried in her hands.

He was stunned. Was that how the hardened Madame Turovoi would face death? Could this strange and beautiful woman really be what she claimed to be?

She turned back toward him, and he saw that her face was full of terror and tears glistened on her cheeks. "They showed me your picture," she said in a choking voice, "and they told me that if I succeeded I could live with you the rest of my life in a cottage on the seashore. And if I failed—" and her voice changed to a harsh whisper "—they would torture me to death."

He stared horrified into her eyes, and suddenly the screen went blank. He checked his instruments. The rocket was eight miles from Khoshak plunging toward it at close to a mile a second. It was too late to alter its course. If he let it strike unexploded, it would scatter through Khoshak lethal concentrations of plutonium. Quickly he reached out and pressed the firing button. Through the window he saw an immediate flash. He moved to a telescope and found that the buildings of Khoshak still stood. He had exploded it in time. It had gone off about four miles in the air and had done no damage except to cause skin burns.

He had saved Sonya. Even if she

were in Khoshak she must be unharmed, for she would be indoors protected from the heat. He had saved her, but he had lost her forever, for he had painfully burned tens of thousands of Eurasians.

All the rest of the way down across Eurasia, the radio was dead. All the way up across Alliance territory there was again silence. Around and around he circled in his orbit, and the silence continued. He strapped himself in front of the television screen and waited, not daring to sleep. There was only silence and blankness. After a great many of the little two-hour days had passed, he grew to understand that the silence was one of contempt and would never be broken. He had betrayed both sides, and neither side would ever again dare to trust him with a rocket carrying an H-bomb. Instead of being a Jupiter who could hurl down thunderbolts at the world, he was a powerless, helpless traitor, rejected by the whole world.

It was easy to foresee his fate. Within three months, the new Alliance rockets would be up there sharing his orbit. He would be sent down to earth in chains, court martialed, stripped of his rank, and shot.

Or perhaps Eurasia would reach there next. Instead of being a traitor to whom they owed a bribe, he would be a fair prisoner of war, one who had already caused them some damage. He could imagine his fate: torture. And perhaps sometime as he

lay writhing in naked agony on a stone table, the door to the torture chamber would open and his torturers would bow obsequiously, as a woman entered and came up to the table and smiled down at him. A tall woman with long black hair and dark eyes. A woman who seemed strangely familiar.

He donned his space suit and went out the airlock. Against the side of the ship he waited briefly until he located Cunningham's body glinting in the sunlight. Then he pushed off in that direction.

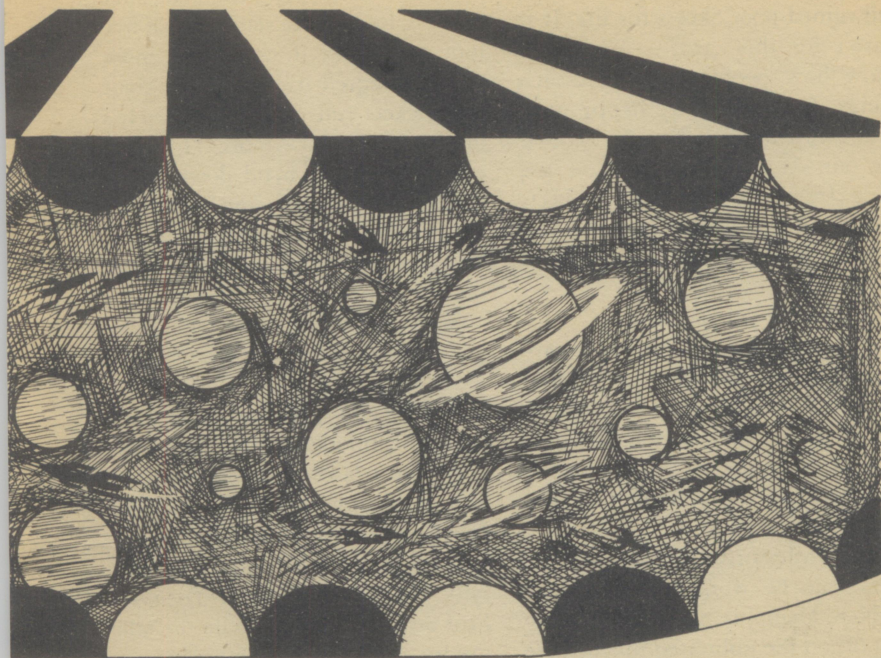
Now he was alone in space, the ship drifting away from him, the earth turning beneath him. For a long time he floated there, and night followed day as he passed into the earth's shadow. Then it was day again. He felt that his oxygen was running out. The first effect, he knew, would be loss of vision. Dimly he could see moving up under him the Caspian Sea sparkling in the sunlight. He shut his eyes and tried to picture Sonya as he had seen her walking on the shore. He imagined himself walking beside her. Then the image faded and there was not even the illusion of vision. He tried to remember her voice, low and gentle and melodious as she had sung to him.

Then the recollection of sound faded away and there was just darkness and silence, and a third lifeless satellite encircled the earth in the two-hour orbit. * * *



Why Skeets Malloy

AN OLD CARNY MAN DOESN'T LIKE TO GIVE AWAY
TRADE SECRETS, AND SKEETS HAD GOOD REASONS WHEN HE TRIED
TO . . . BUT THE PROF USED A VERY ODD TRICK TO STOP HIM!



Has TWO HEADS

by Richard Shaver

SO YOU WANT to know why Skeets looks like that? Well, I'm probably one of the few men on the face of the Earth who could tell you the honest lowdown on Skeets Malloy. I've known Skeets ever since he poked them two heads of his through this carny's office-wagon door and

got himself a job. That was a long time ago.

Skeets was born that way, of course. But it never bothered him being different, until he met the Professor. You see, he wasn't really different from other people, not the way he looked at it, and he didn't even think much about being differ-

ent. The Professor changed all that and ruined poor Skeets for life. If it wasn't for this carny—. Well, you know how people are about such things. But he's pretty happy now, and it turned out to be a good thing for our set-up here, too. You see, aside from his two heads, Skeets turned out to be an old carnival man. Just a natural for the business, you might say.

But let me tell you about it.

Skeets had always accepted his appearance, just like you accept having two legs and one nose and freckles. He's a cagey guy, too. It would take the sharpest con in the rackets to touch Skeets for more than bus fare.

The Professor walked onto the lot—the one he worked on—one day in New Memphis. Skeets was sounding off on the unlimited pulchritude of a row of cooch gals, and he had the tightwads buying tickets like mad, if you'll believe me, to see "the gorgeous girls with two heads and four legs." I'd say from what I've heard about that crowd no other spieler in his best days could have nicked them for a dime.

After he finished his spellbinding, and the crowd drifted on, the Professor walks up to Skeets and says: "My friend, you are just the type I'm looking for. I've a proposition to make to you."

Skeets don't say nothing, he just stands there chewing on two toothpicks and sizing up the little man.

From what I hear, the Prof ain't much to look at. He stands about five foot three, and if he weighs more than a hundred it's because he's got his pockets full of notebooks. He's maybe fifty, maybe more. He wears glasses like an old maid, down on the middle of his nose, and he carries a cane like he needed it. Generally, he looks as if he doesn't know what time of day it is.

Skeets sneers—double—and finally says, "Now, what do you think I could do for you?"

The Professor pushes up his glasses so he can look through them, and gives Skeets a careful onceover, like he's measuring him—and he is. But Skeets don't get what he's measuring him for, or he'd have started running and never stopped. Then the Prof says, "I want you to do the talking for a sideshow I plan booking on circuits. You'll have to handle booking, too. I don't know anything about it. But you're going to work for me, as of now."

Skeets takes the toothpicks out of his mouths, which for him is an exertion, as when he ain't barking he is the laziest man this side of perdition. He says, "Oh, yeah! Show me the cabbage first. I ain't quitting a regular job just for some crackpot's say-so."

The Professor pulls out a roll of money as big as your head. No small bills, either, fifties and bigger in it. He takes out four of those fifties and puts them in Skeets' hand, and grins.

Skeets takes that two hundred bones like he'd never seen money before and stands there wondering. The Professor says, "If you'll just come along with me, I'll show you the gimmick, and you can get to work on bookings."

Skeets toddles off, too numbed by the suddenness of getting his salary quadrupled to even tell his boss he's quitting. And he don't even know the Prof's name, yet! He just follows him.

The little Professor takes him to a big trailer he's got parked near the carny. It's a living trailer, big as those transcontinental moving vans. It's got a house door and a set of steps in the back. The Prof unlocks the door and Skeets follows him in.

You've seen those old-time carny shows, where you go in the door and you find yourself in a swing-room that's pivoted on the wall? Everybody is supposed to sit down and then the thing is swung and the walls go around so you think you're upside down? This trailer is like that inside. It's a room, with benches for maybe twenty people.

"Better sit down, Mr. Malloy," says the Professor, and starts turning a wheel in the wall. The whole room starts rocking, like a ship in a storm, and Skeets grabs for a bench quick before he falls down. This rocking goes on a few seconds. Then the room walls start turning over and over, and Skeets thinks, "Hell, it's nothing but the same old enclosed

gimmick—it won't draw for peanuts."

The Prof shuts the thing down by turning the little wheel, and then he pulls a lever that opens up the sides of the room. Skeets is now looking out on scenery that is not the side street where the trailer is parked. It is not like any scenery such as Skeets has ever seen before. It's like something from another world, in fact. There are some plants with red mouths opening and shutting, and a tornado screwing up the dust in the distance. There is a man with four arms picking mushrooms as big as his head. There is a horse with a hump like a camel, standing there chewing on something that looks like a rock.

Skeets looks at the scenery for a while, and then he looks at the Professor. "Talk," says Skeets.

"I don't know what to tell you, Mr. Malloy. In fact, it might be better if you think all this is just an illusion. But for your spiel, you tell your passengers they are now on Ganymede, or Mercury, or Mars, or Venus—I don't care. I just want to make some money. Pretty good gimmick, eh?"

Skeets nods, looking at the scenery. The Professor lowers the shutters, turns the wheel, and the place goes around again. Skeets sits down, a little sick to his stomach. But he says nothing; he wants that two hundred a week.

The Prof stops the gimmick, raises the shutters, and they are *not* back

on the side street by the carny grounds. They are looking out on some nice purple sea bottom, and the water is coming in the cracks of the room something fierce.

The Professor says, "Oh my, I got the setting wrong," and twirls the wheel. The water stops coming in, but Skeets is already soaking wet.

Skeets says, "That's out. The public won't stand for getting wet. That's carrying realism too far!"

"Yes, you're right." The Professor is looking very downcast. "I thought the water would convince people they were really on Venus. But if you say it's out, why out it comes. Now, look!"

He raises the shutters and the scene outside is all mountains, canyons and vast trees that look like they were hundreds of feet through. On that set, redwoods would have been weeds. It was mighty majestic scenery, and Skeets says, "That's more like it! That's mighty clever

projection work. I think you've got something we can clean up with."

So the Prof shuts off the gimmick, and Skeets shakes his hand on the deal, knowing he can really pull in the shekels anywhere with such a gadget.

All goes well for Skeets for a time. The new gimmick draws crowds like nothing ever shown on a carny grounds before. Skeets learns to work the wheel, and his spiel gets better and better. People tell each other, and the act gets in the papers as something new, something very fine in "projection work far more clever than the movie tycoons can produce." They get a lot of free publicity as local newshounds wax enthusiastic. Every new stand the carny makes, the crowds are bigger, and it gets so that booking isn't necessary to get them in. They're already set up to buy tickets, and Skeets starts charging a dollar a head to cut down the jam.

SCIENCE NOTE: *Discovery of a rock shelter in Dordogne, Central France where prehistoric hunters rested from the chase and ate their kill has been reported by a Harvard anthropologist. Oldest of the remains found in the shelter date back to 25,000 years ago. Most recent were 18,000 years old. Flint weapons found at the site and the remains of the animals the ancient hunters killed sketch an outline of man's development over these thousands of years. Man's dinner table 25,000 years ago featured mainly horse meat. Seven thousand years later, tastes had changed or perhaps the availability of horses. The reindeer by then had replaced the horse on the menu. By the latter part of this period, some 18,000 years ago, the hunters had become much more selective. They were selecting only the two to three-year-old reindeers from the herds.—Science Service*

About this time Skeets begins to realize he ain't getting a fair cut of the take and he starts to badger the Professor for more dough. The Prof raises his salary, but Skeets has got somewhat curious. He starts looking around for some way to put pressure on the Prof for a fifty per cent cut.

So Skeets starts to experiment with the wheel. He has been staying inside, since the customers don't need coaxing to go for the "Space-Warp to Other Worlds", as the banner calls it. He stops it at different places on the wheel and peeks out, hoping to find something, maybe. See, he figures if he can prove to himself and the Prof that the wheel's dangerous, he'll be able to ask for half the take. Meanwhile, the Prof has been staying out of the gadget, occupying himself in the forward part of the trailer where the machinery is installed.

So one day Skeets comes out of that gadget with a passenger that didn't get on at the start. It, the passenger, is a girl with one head, two eyes and two arms, and two legs. With all this, they figure she is a sort of nice-appearing critter, and she even speaks a language they can understand, something like New Memphisian, the only difference being that she couldn't sound her K's like New Memphisians do.

The Professor looks at this cute critter Skeets has brought out of the warp panorama, and he says, "Skeets, I was afraid of this. Now people will

find out we haven't been fooling them, and they will be mad. They will know that we have been taking them to other planets without their consent. They will sue us for every cent we have made, risking their lives in an unsafe gadget."

Skeets says, "Exactly. That's why I brought this girl home with me. Now either you cut me in for half, or I turn her loose and let the newshounds expose your duplicitous veracity."

The Prof says, "Okay, if that's the way you want it. But from now on I'll handle the controls. There'll be no more gallivantin' around. Anything could happen!"

So the Professor handles the controls and Skeets takes the girl back to this here little old planet called Terra, where she comes from. But as he bids her goodbye and turns around to get back into the Professor's warp shell, he finds the shutters are down, the door is closed, and the whole gadget is getting dim already!

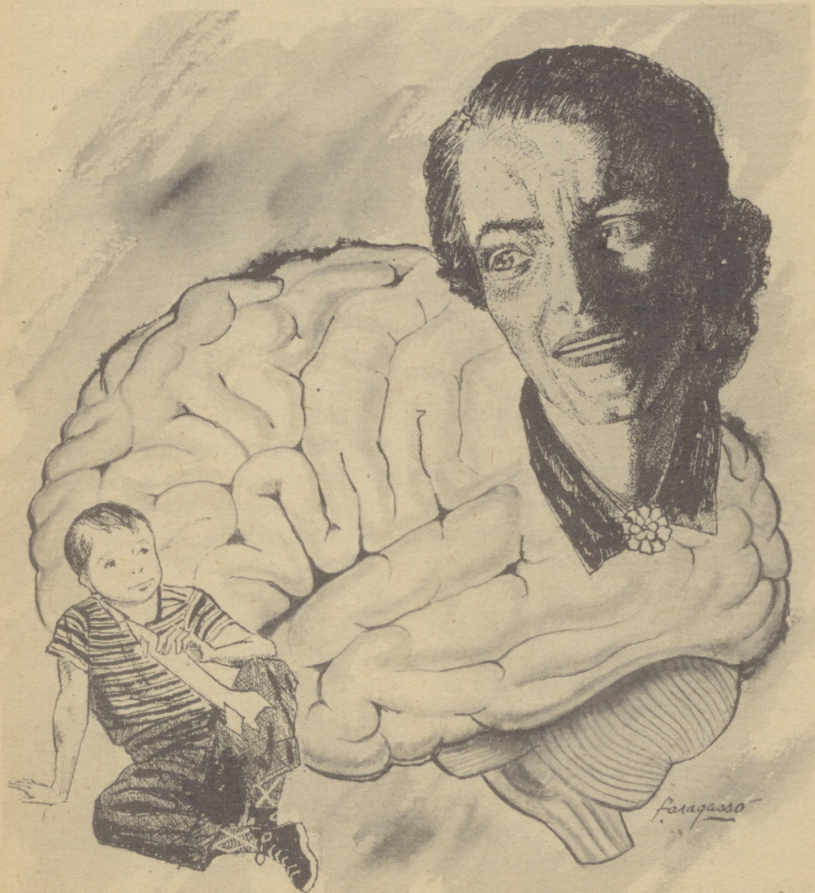
Skeets hollers, "Prof, you absent-minded hoodlum, come back here!"

The Professor shouts back, and Skeets can just about hear him above the hum of the vibrating warp. And do you know what the old rascal tells Skeets? "Get a job in a sideshow," he chuckles meanly. "You're a freak, you know—on Earth!"

So that's how we got ourselves Skeets Malloy—two heads and all—in our carny. And, man, has he been pulling in the suckers! * * *

by Alan E. Nourse

My



Friend BOBBY

WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE HUMAN RACE WHEN, BY

MUTATION OR OTHERWISE, TELEPATHY BECOMES A

NORMAL CHARACTERISTIC? WHAT WILL IT DO TO

HUMAN RELATIONS, TO PARENTS . . . AND CHILDREN?

MY NAME IS Jimmy and I am five years old, and my friend Bobby is five years old too but he says he thinks he really must be older than five years old because he's grown up already and I'm just a little boy. We live out in the country because that's where Mommy and Daddy live, and every morning Daddy gets into the car that we have out in the barn and rides into the city to work, and every night he comes back to eat supper and to see Mommy and me and Bobby.

Once I asked Daddy why we don't live in the city like some people do and he laughed and said you wouldn't really want to live in the city would you? And I said I thought it would be fun, and he said but you couldn't have Bobby in the city, so

I guess it's better that we live out in the country after all, and anyway Daddy says that the city is no place to raise kids these days. I asked Bobby if I am a kid and he said he guessed so but I don't think he really knew what that meant because Bobby isn't so very smart. But Bobby is my friend and I like him.

Mommy doesn't like Bobby very much and when I am bad she makes Bobby go outdoors even when it's very cold outdoors. Mommy thinks that I shouldn't play with Bobby so much because she says after all Bobby is only a dog but I like Bobby. Everybody else is so big, and when Mommy and Daddy are home all I can see is their legs unless they look down at me from way up high, and when I do something bad I am afraid

of them because they're so strong.

But Bobby is strong, too, and he isn't any bigger than I am, and he is always nice to me. He has a long shaggy red coat and a long pointed nose, and a nice collar of white fur and people sometimes say to Daddy what a nice collie that is and Daddy says yes isn't he and he takes to the boy so. I don't know what a collie is but I have great fun with Bobby and sometimes he lets me ride on his back and we have secrets with each other even though I don't think he is very smart. But I don't see what is wrong with Mommy and Daddy because they don't understand me when I talk to them like I talk to Bobby and they just pretend like they can't hear me.

I am sorry when Daddy goes to work in the morning because Daddy is nice to me and takes me and Bobby for walks. But Mommy never takes me for walks and when we are alone she is busy and she isn't nice to me. Sometimes she says I am a bad boy and makes me stay in my room even if I don't do anything bad and sometimes she thinks things in her head that she doesn't tell me. I don't know why Mommy doesn't like me and Bobby doesn't know either but we like it best when Mommy lets us go outdoors to play in the barn or go down to the creek. If I get my feet wet Mommy says I am very bad so I stay on the bank and let Bobby go in, but one day when Bobby went into the water just be-

fore we went home for supper Mommy scolded me and told me I was bad for letting Bobby go into the water and when I told her she hadn't told me *not* to let Bobby go in she was angry and I could tell that she didn't like me.

Almost every day I do something that Mommy says is bad even when I try specially to be good. Sometimes right after Daddy goes off in the morning I know that Mommy is angry and is going to spank me today because she is thinking how she will spank me, but she never says so out loud. Sometimes she pretends that she's not angry and takes me up on her lap and says I'm her nice little boy but all the time I can hear her thinking about how she doesn't like me and how she doesn't even want to touch me and wondering why my hair doesn't grow nice like the Bennet twins that live up the road. I don't see how Mommy can say one thing and really say something else inside her head and when I look at her she puts me down and says she is busy and will I get out from underfoot, and then pretty soon I do something that makes her angry and she makes me go to my room or she spans me.

Bobby doesn't like this and once he growled at Mommy, and then Mommy chased him outdoors with a broom before she sent me to bed, and I cried all day because it was cold outdoors and I wanted to have Bobby with me.

I wonder why Mommy doesn't like me?

One day I was a bad boy and let Bobby come into the house before Mommy told me I could. Bobby hadn't done anything bad but Mommy hit him on the back with the broom and hurt him and chased him back outdoors and then she told me I was a very bad boy. I could tell that she was going to spank me and I knew she would hurt me because she was so big, and I ran upstairs and hid in my room. Then Mommy stamped her foot hard and said Jimmy you come down here this minute, and I didn't answer, and then she said if I have to come upstairs I'll whip you until you can't sit down, and I didn't dare answer because Mommy hurts me when she gets angry like that. And then I heard her coming up the stairs and into my room and she opened the closet door and saw me.

I said please don't hurt me Mommy but she reached down and caught my ear and dragged me out of the closet. Then I bit her hand, and she screamed and let go and I ran and locked myself into the bathroom because I knew she would hurt me bad if I didn't. I stayed there all day long and I could hear Mommy running the sweeper downstairs and I couldn't see why she wanted to hurt me so much just because I let Bobby come in before she told me I could. And I could tell that Mommy was

afraid of me even though she was much bigger than I was and I don't see why anybody as big as Mommy should be afraid of me but she was.

Then when Daddy came home I heard him talking to Mommy, and then he came up to the bathroom and said I want to talk to you Jimmy open the door. I said I want Bobby first so he went down and called Bobby and then I opened the door and came out of the bathroom. Daddy reached down and lifted me high up on his shoulder and took me into my bedroom and just sat there patting Bobby's head for a while and I couldn't hear his think-talk very well.

And then he said you've got to be good to your Mommy and do what she says and not lock yourself up in rooms any more, and I said but Mommy was going to hurt me, and Daddy said when you're a bad boy your Mommy has to punish you so you will remember to be a good boy, and she doesn't like to punish you but she does it because she has to. I knew that was not true because Mommy likes to punish me but I didn't dare say that to Daddy. Daddy isn't afraid of me like Mommy is and he is nice to me most times, and he said will you promise to be nice to Mommy, and I said yes if Mommy won't hit Bobby any more with the broom. And Daddy said after all Bobby can be a bad dog just like you can be a bad boy can't he? And I didn't think Bobby was ever a bad

dog but I said yes I guessed so. And I wanted to ask Daddy why Mommy was afraid of me but I didn't because I knew Daddy liked Mommy more than anybody and maybe he would be angry at me for saying that Mommy was afraid of me.

But that night I heard Mommy and Daddy talking down in the living room and I sat on the top step so I could hear them, and Bobby sat there too, but I could tell he didn't know what they were saying because Bobby isn't very smart and can't understand word-talk like I can. He can only understand think-talk, and he doesn't understand that very well. Downstairs Mommy was crying and she was saying Ben you don't understand, there's something wrong with the child, he knows what I'm thinking, I can tell by the way he looks at me that he knows.

And Daddy said darling, that's ridiculous, how could he possibly know what you're thinking, and Mommy said he does, he does! Ever since he was a little boy he's known—oh, Ben, it's horrible. I can't do anything with him because he *knows* what I'm going to do before I do it.

And Daddy said oh, Carol, you're wrong, you're making things up, the child is just a little smarter than most kids is all, and Mommy said I can't help it, I just can't bear it any longer, we've got to take him to a doctor, I don't even like to look at him, and Daddy said you're tired, you're let-

ting little things get on your nerves. Perhaps the boy does look a little strange, but the doctor said it was just that the fontanelles weren't closing quite right and that many children don't get a good growth of hair before they're six or seven, and after all he isn't a *bad-looking* boy, and Mommy said that isn't true, he's horrible! I can't bear it, Ben, *please* do something, and Daddy said but what can I do? You're just excited about what happened today and I talked to the boy and he was sorry and promised he would behave himself.

And then Mommy said and that dog—it follows him around wherever he goes, and he is simply wicked if the dog isn't around, and Daddy said isn't it perfectly normal for a boy to love his dog, and Mommy said no, not like this, talking to him all the time, and the dog acting exactly as if he understands—there's something wrong with the child, something horribly wrong.

Then Daddy was quiet for a while, and then he said if it will make you feel any better we can have Doctor Grant take a look at him, maybe he can convince you that there's nothing wrong with the boy, and Mommy said please, Ben, anything, I can't stand much more of this.

Then I went back to bed, and Bobby curled up on the foot of the bed, and I asked him what were fontanelles, and Bobby just yawned and said he didn't know but he thought I was nice, and he would always take

care of me, so I didn't worry any more and went to sleep.

I have a panda out in the barn and the panda's name is Bobby too and at first Bobby the dog was jealous of the panda until I told him that the panda was only a make-believe Bobby and he was a real Bobby. Then Bobby liked the panda, and the three of us played out in the barn all day. We decided not to tell Mommy and Daddy about the panda, and kept it for our own secret. It was a big panda, as big as Mommy or Daddy, and sometimes I thought I would make the panda hurt Mommy but then I knew Daddy would be sorry so I didn't tell him to do it.

Bobby and I were playing with Bobby the panda the day the doctor came and Mommy called me in and made Bobby stay outside. I didn't like the doctor because he smelled like a dirty old cigar and he had a big red nose with three black hairs coming out of it, and he wheezed when he bent down to look at me. Daddy and Mommy sat on the couch and the doctor said let me have a look at you young fellow and I said but I'm not sick, and the doctor said ha ha, of course you aren't, you're a fine-looking boy, but just let me listen to your chest for a minute.

So he put a cold thing to my chest and stuck some tubes in his ears, and listened, and then he looked in my eyes with a bright light, and looked into my ears, and then he felt my

head all over. He had big hairy hands and I didn't like his smell but I knew Mommy would be angry if I didn't hold still so I let him finish looking at me. Then he told Daddy some big words that I couldn't understand, but in think-talk he was saying that my head still hadn't closed up right and I didn't have as much hair as I should but otherwise I seemed to be all right. He said I was a good stout-looking boy, but if they wanted a specialist to look at me he would arrange it.

But Daddy said would that cost very much and the doctor said yes it probably would and he didn't see any real need for it because my bones were just a little slow in developing, and Mommy said have you seen other children like that, and the doctor said no, but if the boy seemed to be normal and intelligent there wasn't any need to worry. Then Mommy told me to go upstairs, and I went but I stopped on the top stair and listened.

Then the doctor said now what is it that's really bothering you, and Mommy told him what she had told Daddy, how she thought I knew what she was thinking, and the doctor said to Daddy Ben, have you ever felt any such thing about the boy? And Daddy said of course not, he sometimes gives you the feeling that he's smarter than he should be but any parents think that sometimes.

And then Mommy broke down and her voice got loud and she said

he's a monster, I know it, there's something wrong, he's different from us, him and that horrible dog. The doctor said but it's a beautiful collie, and Mommy said but he talks to it and it understands him, and the doctor said now, Carol, let's be reasonable, and Mommy said I've been reasonable too long, you men just can't see it is all, don't you think I'd know a normal child if I saw one?

And then she cried and cried, and finally she said all right, I know I'm making a fool of myself, maybe I'm just overtired, and the doctor said I'm sure that's the trouble, try to get some rest, and sleep longer at night, and Mommy said I can't sleep at night, I just lie there and think, and the doctor said well we'll fix that, enough of this nonsense now, you need your sleep, and if you're not sleeping well *you* should see the doctor.

And then he went away, and pretty soon Daddy let Bobby in, and Bobby came upstairs and jumped up and licked my face as if he'd been away for a hundred million years. And pretty soon Mommy called me down for supper, and she wasn't crying any more, and she and Daddy didn't say anything about what they had said to the doctor. Mommy made me a special surprise for dessert, some ice cream with chocolate syrup on top, and after supper we all went for a walk, even though it was cold outside and snowing again. Then Daddy said well, I think things will

be all right, and Mommy said I hope so, but I could tell that she didn't think so, and she was more afraid of me than ever.

For a while I thought Mommy was going to be nice to me and Bobby. She was very nice especially when Daddy was home but when Daddy was away at work sometimes Mommy jumped when she saw me looking at her and then sent us outdoors to play and not come in until lunch. I liked that because I knew if we weren't near Mommy everything would be all right. When I was with Mommy I tried hard not to look at her and I tried not to hear what she was thinking, but lots of times I would see her looking at me, and then looking at Bobby, and those times I couldn't help hearing what she was thinking because it was so loud inside my head that it made my head hurt. But I knew Mommy would be angry so I pretended I couldn't hear what she was thinking at all.

One day when we were out in the barn playing with Bobby the panda we saw Mommy coming down from the kitchen and going through the snow toward the barn and Bobby said look out Jimmy Mommy is coming and I quickly told Bobby the panda to go hide under the hay so Mommy couldn't see him. But the panda was so big his whole top and his little pink nose stuck out of the hay. I was sure he'd be seen.

And Mommy looked around the barn and said you've been out here for a long time, what have you been doing, and I said nothing, and Bobby said nothing too, only in think talk. And Mommy said you are too, you've been doing something naughty, and I said no Mommy truly we haven't, and then the panda sneezed, real loud, and I looked at him and he looked so funny with his nose sticking out of the hay that I laughed out loud. And Mommy looked angry and said what are you laughing at and I said nothing, because I knew Mommy couldn't see the panda, and he looked funnier than ever sticking out of the hay.

Then Mommy got mad and grabbed my ear and shook me until it hurt bad and said you naughty boy, don't you lie to me, what have you been doing out here? And it hurt me so much I started to cry, and then Bobby snarled at Mommy, loud and low, and curled his lips back over his teeth and snarled some more. And Mommy got real white in the face and let go of me and she said get out of here you nasty dog, and Bobby snarled louder and then snapped at her.

She screamed and she said Jimmy you come in the house this minute and leave that nasty dog outdoors and I said I won't come, I hate you, and Mommy said Jimmy! You wicked little monster, and I said when I get big I'm going to hurt you and throw you down in the wood shed

and lock you in until you die and make you eat coconut pudding and Bobby hates you too.

And Mommy looked terrible and I could feel how much she was afraid of me and I said I'll hurt you bad when I get big, and then she turned and walked back to the house. And Bobby wagged his tail and said I won't let her hurt you and I said Bobby you shouldn't have snapped at her because I was thinking what Daddy would say when he came home but Bobby said I like you and I won't let anything ever hurt you. I'll always take care of you no matter what. And I said promise? No matter what? And Bobby said I promise. And then we told Bobby the panda to come out but it wasn't much fun to play any more.

After a little while Mommy called me and said lunch was ready. She was still white and I said can Bobby come too and she said of course Bobby can come, Bobby's a nice dog, so we went in to eat lunch. Mommy was talking real fast, about was I having fun playing in the barn and was I sure I wasn't too cold because it was below zero outside and the radio said it was getting colder, and she wasn't saying anything about what I had said or what Bobby had done and she was talking so fast I couldn't hear what she was thinking except in patches.

And she set my lunch on the table and then she set a bowl of food on the floor for Bobby and said nice

Bobby, here's your dinner. And Bobby came over and sniffed and then he looked up at me and said it smells funny, and Mommy said nice Bobby, it's good hamburger just the way you like it—

And then I saw what she was thinking for just a second and it was terrible because she was thinking that soon Bobby would be dead, and I remembered Daddy talking a long time ago about somebody feeding bad things to the Benner's dog and the dog died, and I said don't eat it, Bobby, and Bobby snarled at the dish.

And then Mommy said tell the dog to eat it, and I said no, you're bad and you want to hurt Bobby, and then I picked up the dish and threw it at Mommy. It missed and smashed on the wall, and she screamed and turned and ran out into the other room. She was screaming for Daddy and saying I can't stand it, he's a monster, a murderous little monster and we've got to get out of here before he kills us all, he knows what we're thinking, he's horrible, and then she was on the telephone, and she couldn't make the words come straight when she tried to talk.

I was scared and I said come on Bobby and let's lock ourselves up in my room and we ran upstairs and locked the door. Mommy was banging things and laughing and crying downstairs and screaming we've got to get out, he'll kill us if we don't,

and a while later I heard the car come up the road fast, and saw Daddy run into the house.

Then Mommy was screaming please Ben, we've got to get out of here, he tried to kill me, and the dog is vicious, he bit me when I tried to make him stop.

And then Daddy was running up the stairs two at a time and I could feel him inside my head for the first time and I knew he was mad, I never knew Daddy to be so mad before, and he tried the door and then he said open the door, and I said no, and he said open the door or I'll kill you and then he hit the door and hit it again and then the lock broke and the door flew open, and Daddy stood there panting. His eyes looked terrible and he had a leather belt in his hand, doubled up, and he said come here, and his voice was so loud it hurt my ears.

Down below Mommy was crying please Ben, take me away, he'll kill me, he'll kill us both, he's a monster! I said don't hurt me Daddy it was Mommy, she was bad to me, and he said come here, even louder. And I was frightened and I said please, Daddy, I'll be good, I promise. I promise, Daddy.

And then he started for me and I screamed out Bobby! Don't let him hurt me, Bobby—and then Bobby snarled like a wild animal and jumped at Daddy and bit his wrist bad so the blood spurted out, and Daddy shouted and dropped the belt

and kicked at Bobby but Bobby was quick, and he jumped for Daddy, and I saw his white teeth flash and heard them snap close to Daddy's throat, and then Bobby was snarling like a wild lion and I was excited and I shouted hurt him, Bobby, he's been bad to me too, he wants to hurt me, hurt him Bobby, don't let him hurt me.

And I saw Daddy's eyes open wide, and felt something jump in his mind, something that I had never felt in Daddy's mind before and I knew he was understanding my think-talk, and I said I want Bobby to hurt you and Mommy because you're not nice to me, only Bobby and my panda are nice to me, hurt him Bobby, go ahead, bite him in the throat and make him bleed. And then Daddy caught Bobby by the neck and threw him down on the floor and slammed the door shut and dragged something up to the door, and then he was running downstairs, and he shouted my God, I heard it, you were right, Carol, you were right, *I felt him, I felt what he was thinking!*

And Mommy cried please, Ben, take me away, let's leave them, never come back, never, never, and Daddy said it's horrible, he told the dog to kill me, he's something evil, he's monstrous. And I could hear Daddy's awful fear pounding into my head clear from downstairs.

Then I heard the door banging, and looked out the window and saw

Daddy carrying suitcases out to the car, and then he and Mommy both came out running and got into the car and the car started down the hill and then they were gone. And the house was very quiet. I looked out the window and I couldn't see anything but the deep snow and the sun going down over the hill.

Now Bobby and I and the panda are all together and I'm glad Mommy and Daddy are gone. I went to sleep for a little while because my head hurt so but now I'm awake, and Bobby is lying over across the room licking his feet, and I'm glad, glad, glad that Mommy and Daddy have gone away and I hope they don't ever come back, because Bobby will take care of me. Bobby is my friend and he said he'd always take care of me no matter what and he understands my think talk even if he isn't very smart. It's beginning to get cold in the house because nobody has gone down to fix the fire but I don't care about that. Pretty soon I will tell Bobby to go down and fix the fire and then I will tell him to get my supper for me and then I will stay up all night because Mommy and Daddy won't ever come back to make me go to bed. There's just me and the panda and Bobby, and Bobby will take care of me because he's my friend.

It's getting very cold now, and I'm getting hungry. Soon I will tell Bobby to feed me and I will tell him to start the heat going again. * * *



The CARGO

by Len J. Moffatt

CARGO, THE CREEPER, moved slowly across the crusty deck of the darkened hold. Cargo, the creeper, came to an abrupt halt when it touched something immobile in the darkness.

**THERE'S A LESSON
HERE . . . A
LESSON, ODDLY
ENOUGH, IN THE
POWER OF LOVE OVER
HUMAN DESTINY . . .**

At first it assumed that the motionless object was Cargo, the thinker.

"No," said the thinker. "It is not me. It is Cargo, the corpse, once Cargo, the emoter."

"Sad, sad," murmured Cargo, the feeder. "So sad that our emoter has been deprived of life."

"You miss it more than any of us, do you not?" remarked Cargo, the excretor. "Though I have suspected that the creeper feels the lack of it almost as much . . ."

"No more than you!" said the creeper. "No more than any of us. And as Cargo, the whole, we will surely find reproduction an unhappy experience—without the emoter. As for me, I suspect that forming the mother egg will be impossible without it. I suggest . . ."

"Enough!" commanded the thinker. "The problem is mine. I do not suspect, I *know* that you, creeper, are letting your powers wane. You

desire to return to our mother egg, and you know that is impossible, even were we from whence we were taken. Our mother egg has long been without life, remember that. Now it is our turn to form a mother egg, and reproduce our eventual replacements."

"But without the emoter . . ." chorused the others.

"I believe that it can be done without the emoter," continued Cargo, the thinker. "Each of us serves a specific purpose. The chief purpose of the emoter was to intensify our desire to reproduce. It is our duty and our purpose to survive and to reproduce. We all feel this urge despite the lifelessness of the emoter. I believe we *can* unite and form a mother egg, which will produce our offspring."

"But you do not really *know*," said the creeper.

"True, it is a theory unproven," admitted the thinker. "We can but try. If we succeed then I am proven correct. If we do not succeed, I am proven incorrect. Then it will be my duty purpose and desire to think of another way for us . . ."

"But what if our attempt to form a mother egg fails, and in failing, deprives all of us of life?" argued the excretor.

"It may be painful without the emoter," suggested the feeder. "Since they deprived it of life, I sometimes find the absorption of our food a painful process. Perhaps it is the food

they give us, though it is similar to our diet at the place from whence we were taken."

"I too find it painful at times—" began the excretor.

"Enough!" came the thinker's command again. "We must bear this uncomfortable situation until I have thought of our way out of it. I too feel the pain sometimes, as do we all. Further, I must warn you that when we do unite to form the mother egg the pain may be more intense—without our emoter to turn pain into pleasantness—for we will be united physically as well as telepathically. However, I have a plan—assuming our uniting proves fruitful."

"A plan for what?" asked the creeper, dully.

"If the mother egg we form produces young, and if the young is another Cargo—the whole possessing all five free-moving parts—and if we survive the reproduction phase by disuniting, it might be wise to destroy four members of the newly formed whole. We could save only the new emoter . . ."

"Which we can adopt!" said the feeder and the excretor together.

"It is a far-fetched plan," grumbled the creeper. "But we must do as you instruct. Further, you risk as much as we, so . . ."

"So shall we begin to form a mother egg?" suggested the feeder.

"It is not time," said the thinker. "All of this must be done with great

care and at the proper time. Remember that we are captives. Our captors—from what I can read of their thoughts—do not plan to destroy us, unless we indicate a desire to destroy them. They wish to take us to the place from whence *they* came. Then we will be shown to their fellows.

"Remember that we appear as a strange life-form to them, even as they appear as a strange life-form to us. The emoter was deprived of its life by an accident, due to the clumsiness on the part of our captors. In fact, they do not know that it is lifeless. In fact—."

The thinker's thoughts trailed off.

"Yes?" prompted the others.

"I hesitate to tell you this," continued the thinker. "You may not be able to bear the shock as well as I. Your nerve centers are not as well developed as mine, for I am the thinker. I have tried to soften the blow by having us adopt the label they have given us. A label which is a meaningless symbol to us, but not to them."

"Cargo," said the others.

"Yes, Cargo," said the thinker.

"They call us 'the Cargo.' At first I divined only part of their meaning. Apparently they consider us a very low life-form, much lower than themselves."

"Mmmmm!" said the others.

"But that is not all," the thinker went on. "Cargo is a term for things—usually inanimate objects—which they carry from place to place in

strange sky creepers such as this one, in which we are forced to exist. Now, do you remember how they captured us?"

"They were very clever; they must have studied our habits thoroughly," muttered the creeper. "They waited until I was away seeking food. Then they took you into this huge hollow creeper . . ."

"They are really quite stupid," contradicted the thinker. "Even if you had been close by me they would have been able to remove me to this place. At least, they would have tried. No, I guess they would have succeeded. I would not have ordered you to obstruct them, though even without my orders you might have had such a desire. Yes, I would have ordered submission, as I have up to now.

"They do outnumber us physically, and if we had attempted obstruction they might have deprived all of us of life.

"But I insist they are stupid, for I can read some of their thoughts. They did not know that once they had captured one of us, they had captured all of us. They did not know that you four would follow me here, as a matter of natural necessity. In fact, they were quite surprised when you four pushed past their guard to enter this place. That is why the emoter became a corpse. The guard thought you meant me harm and struck at you, until his superior ordered him to desist. By then it was

too late for our emoter. But they did not know this. When the emoter became immobile, they assumed it was like me.

"Further, they assumed that you three remaining were similar to me. But—and this is the shocking thing—they believe each of us to be separate life-forms, somehow similar and on friendly terms. They do not know that we are parts of the whole. To them we are a cargo of lower animals, bound for *their* strange home, wherever it may be . . ."

For a while there were no thoughts within the darkened hold.

Finally, the creeper murmured quietly:

"I think I have recovered sufficiently to continue communication. Your information leads me to an obvious question. If they believe us to be separate things . . . what then are they? Are they—?"

"Yes," said the thinker, quickly, as though to get it over with. "Each a separate being unto itself. Are there any questions from the others?"

"How do *they* reproduce?" asked the feeder and excretor in unison.

"That is what I am now trying to discover," replied the thinker. "The answer may or may not help us in our problem, but—now that you have survived learning the truth about them—you might find the answer interesting. My primary reason for investigating their thoughts is, of course, to solve our other problem. That, in itself, is as important as

our problem of attempting reproduction without our emoter."

"Freedom," said the others.

"Correct," said the thinker.

Food was thrust into the hold through a specially prepared hole in the hatchway. The feeder went to work, while the others absorbed its radiations. After the excretor had accomplished its purpose, the thinker concentrated once again on the thoughts of their captors.

Commander Ritter of the UNSN *Explorer* (spacer, first class) tried to relax in his cabin, as he contemplated the ship's remarkable cargo through a video screen. The hidden TV cameras in the live-cargo hold were equipped with infrared lighting, making it possible for the ship's captain to observe the captives even though they were in pitch darkness.

The commander toyed impatiently with his dessert, glancing occasionally at the screen. He was waiting for the arrival of the expedition's biologist.

Blast him! thought the commander, *He's five minutes late. Doesn't he know this ship is run on a schedule? Too bad he counts more as a passenger than as a member of the crew. If he was a crew member, by God, I'd . . .*

Commander Ritter let his thoughts wander off, as he permitted his stern features to relax into the semblance of a smile. Doctor Norham III, the living picture of an

eager young biologist, had just entered the cabin and given the commander a mock salute.

"Get lost on your way here?" inquired Ritter. "I know some of the passageways on this spacer seem a bit complicated to an earthlubber, but you should have the hang of them by now."

"Reprimand noted," grinned Norham. "Go ahead with your dessert, sir. I've had mine. Two helpings, in fact. Which is why I'm late. But before I forget, I have a question."

"Yes, Doctor?"

"Why can't I have one of these TV things in *my* cabin? After all, I am the chief biologist of this expedition. I'd like to be able to study our pets once in a while without begging leave to use your cabin. Of course, I could go directly to the hold—"

"I beg your pardon all to hell," said Ritter, "but as long as I'm captain of this ship, nobody enters that hold until we make Lunaport."

"But why not, Commander?" Norham's grin faded. "We found them on a planet which was so Earth-like we could motate around on it without oxy-masks and pressure suits. Apparently they are surviving in the hold, in Earth-like conditions. Most co-operative pets, I'd say. Even eat the garbage we give 'em out of the hydro-gardens. Have made no move to escape, or tried to harm us in any way. All of this watching from afar is damned silly, if you ask me."

"Nobody goes in that hold," repeated Ritter. "I have a spaceman, second, feeding them, and he's on the gig list for goofing off last inspection. At that, he's only supposed to shove the stuff in and close the hatch chop-chop. The guards have orders to keep the hatch closed and locked at all other times. I admit that I'm curious too, probably as curious as you are. But I feel there's something queer about those beasts, and—well, frankly, man, I'm just a little afraid of them." The commander stared sullenly at the screen as he finished his speech.

Just a little afraid? thought Norham III. *Well, you're a salty talker, anyway.* Then he said aloud:

"I've felt the same fear, Commander, but still I'd risk visiting our pets, if you'd permit me. But you won't—so the next best thing's for me to visit you and watch them. About their feeding time, isn't it? According to my calculations, they eat one meal to our four, and since they were fed last—"

"I *know* it is time to feed them, according to your schedule," interrupted the commander, impatiently. "But they won't starve to death while I tell you something. I invited you here, remember? Ordinarily, you invite yourself—quite alright, of course. But I wanted to show you something I noticed the last time. You weren't here then. You were probably having a third dessert."

"Uh . . . something like that,"

grinned Norham III. Actually he had been below decks, trying to bribe the cargo guards into letting him enter the cargo hold. The guards, who feared the wrath of Ritter more than they loved the currency of the United Nations, would not be bought off.

"Well," continued Ritter. "Just for the hell of it, and because I was sick of looking at them, I adjusted the TV unit so the infrared was off. The cameras still worked, of course, but all I got on the screen was darkness, naturally."

"Naturally," agreed the biologist.

"I was about to turn off the whole set when a funny thing happened. I saw the little hatch open—the feeding hatch, you know—I could see this because of the light in the passageway outside the hold. That is, when the spaceman, second, opened the hatch . . ."

"Of course," said the biologist. "I know what you mean. Go on."

"Well, as usual, just one of the beasts takes any interest in the food, though—again, as usual—the others seem to move closer to the one feeding. I got a glimpse of this familiar scene, and then the hatch was closed."

"And darkness again, or did you switch on the infra?"

"Neither," snapped the commander. "That's what I want you to see tonight. As soon as that one little bugger started eating, it began giving off radiations of some kind. And I swear those others seemed to pick

up the radiations and absorb them. That is, all but one of them. You know the two that just sit around and pulsate most of the time. Well, the one of them—"

"The one I feel is injured or—"

"Yes, that one. It didn't seem to be getting any of the radiations, or even trying to. Now the thing is you can't see this phenomenon in infra-light. I'll give the signal for the things to be fed now, I'll turn off the infrared, and you watch and see if you see the same thing. I tell you, man, it isn't natural . . . not even *alien* natural, if you know what I mean. Why it seems to me like—"

"One of them eats and gives off radiations which feeds the others," finished the biologist. "I've suspected this for some time, but never thought of changing the light or anything to check the theory. Guess I assumed the energy emanating from the eater would be invisible."

"You mean you knew how they operated?" asked the commander.

"Theory, sir, theory. We still don't know anything about them. Crazy as it sounds, they could be just one animal. As for the one that apparently never moves at all—I do wish you'd have a unit like this in my cabin so I could keep more constant watch—that one could be dead."

"You know this is the only available TV unit aboard," muttered the commander, as he pushed a buzzer on his desk panel. "Others are in some vital use or ruined by this clum-

sy crew I got stuck with. And I intend to keep this unit here. The ship and its contents are my responsibility. I'M the one who'll take the gaff if anything goes wrong, so I'm the one who'll watch the beasts—when I have the time."

"But since I have more time, and with all your duties . . . Seems to me I should . . ."

"No arguments," said Ritter. He adjusted the video screen, and the two men watched it closely, peering at the hazy darkness.

The cargo was being fed. Norham III moved closer to get a better look. Yes, it was as the commander said. Too bad he had to be the one to make the discovery. Norham had developed the theory, of course, but Ritter, by pulling a switch, had first seen the proof which turned theory into fact.

But wait! What was that other one doing? It had been absorbing the eater's radiations along with the others (save for the injured or dead one), and now it was giving off radiations of its own. Now what the devil do you suppose . . . ah! but of course!

Norham III explained it to the commander. Ritter laughed, almost scoffingly. "S'hard to believe!" he chortled. "Tell me, Doctor, how do you suppose they reproduce?"

"That," said Norham III, "is an excellent question, sir. Shall we discuss the matter as we continue to observe them? The infra, please. Thank

you. Now as for sex, it is difficult to tell . . ."

The discussion and the observation lasted several hours into the spacer's pseudo-night. Both men had red-rimmed eyes and dry throats when the biologist finally departed for his own quarters. There really had not been much to see after the cargo was fed. They had hardly moved at all. But the discussion had been fascinating.

Wearily the commander clicked off the video, yawned mightily, wrapped his arms around his chest and scratched sleepily at his ribs.

That man has more damn fool theories, he thought, as he methodically removed his uniform. The captain was sure his idea was most logical. If all of the beasts formed one thing, then they were all one sex. The other sex was back on Planet PC-S2a. Someone would have to go back and get this plural pet a mate.

As he turned down his bunk, he thought of home. Two months 'til home, he thought, and his hard face showed more tender lines. He thought of his wife, always waiting, always patient. There were men who had their wives aboard. He could have had it that way too. Sally had wanted to take the Space WAVES Training, but, thank God, he had put his foot down.

No woman of his was going to risk her pretty neck in space. If others were fool enough to let their women go, even take their women

with them—where the Regulations permitted—that was their foolish business. It was better *his* way. He had something to look forward to. She would meet him at Jerseyport, after he'd made the skip from Luna. This time they had agreed would be family-beginning time. After all, they weren't getting any younger. Then the next time he would have a wife *and* child to come home to. Home . . . Sally . . . the recordings of Wagner and Schweibinz . . . love . . .

In their private quarters in the spacer's sick bay, the ship's medical officer was making love to the Chief Pharmacist Mate. This action represented no breach of Space Navy regulations, as neither of the two were on duty.

"We're luckier than most," sighed the Medical Officer. "Not every man aboard has his wife with him. And in two months we'll be home again, and able to see the children . . . Oh? What's the matter, dear?"

"Nothing," whispered the Chief Pharmacist Mate. "Nothing important. I was just thinking of the cargo. The live cargo, that is. I've been on four of these expeditions, but this is the first time they've captured—and kept alive—alien beasts. Wonder if it's safe to take them back to Earth."

"First time we encountered a planet so like Mother Earth," said the Medical Officer. "The things will probably live like kings in some zoo,

after the biologists and whozises get through with 'em."

"I wasn't worried about them!" said the Chief Pharmacist Mate. "I meant . . . is it safe for . . . us?"

"Nonsense!" laughed the Medical Officer. "Now just forget all about the cargo, and . . . uh . . . 'tend to business, darling . . ."

Her reply was silent, but earnest.

Doctor Norham III, the eager young biologist, who — strangely enough—came from a family of renowned biologists, tossed restlessly in his bunk.

Damn' intriguing animals, he thought. Too bad everybody's afraid to go near them. Be named after me, I suppose, when we get home. Two more months. It seems like ages. Yes, they might as well bear my name. No Norham IV's for me. Even if I could bring a wife with me on these rat races . . . no, not worth it. There's always some willing biddy aboard. Like that cook, second. And when I get home. Whom shall I go to see first? Della? Emily? Rosalee? Hmmm. Aside from the cargo, that's my biggest problem . . . Now Em has the best figure, but Della has a way of . . .

Sleep was slow in coming.

And in various other parts of the spaceship, at various times during the pseudo-night, men and women, awake or sleeping, dreamed of the things they loved, the things they hated, the things they feared. At one

time or another, each thought—if only for a fleeting, fearful moment—of the cargo.

"I have made a most interesting discovery," announced Cargo, the thinker. "I believe I have found our emoter. Let us unite to form the mother egg, at once."

"But our emoter has been deprived of life!" murmured the feeder, wondering if perhaps the thinker had been deprived of its brain.

"Our original emoter, yes," said the thinker. "But I have found a replacement. The beings which survive in this great creeper all have emoters, in a sense. They are not exactly as our emoter was physically. But I think they will serve the same purpose. As I explained before, each being of our captors is a separate unit unto itself, each with its own set of little emotional drives, but all of these drives are similar. I will contact them and confiscate them—"

"And we can use them to shield us during reproduction!" finished the creeper. "We need not feel pain, but will experience the usual pleasure."

"Exactly," said the thinker.

"Are you sure their emotions will serve us without harm?" asked the excretor. "As I will be the one to eject the new-made cargos . . ."

"The fear in your question answers your question," said the thinker. "Each of us retain some small emotional factors of his own, despite the lack of our emoter. In short,

separately—and as a whole, which we will soon be—we have a semblance of our own emotions within us. We will merely use our captors' emotions as we would have used our own emoter: to heighten and give force to our emotion of joy during reproduction. I am sure there will be no physical pain, or rather, that our joys will be of such greatness and vastness, that we will be unable to sense the pain, if any. Now, I urge that we unite . . ."

For one terrible moment the entire human population of the great spaceship was shocked into unconsciousness. Then, almost as quickly, they returned to their worlds of reality.

Commander Ritter sat up in his bunk, wide awake. "Funny dream!" he muttered. "Now what was it about? Let's see, I was thinking of Sally before I went to sleep. Sally! Gad, she must be looking old by now. What'd I ever see in her anyway? Wish we could stay in space and keep exploring new planets. That's man's work. Women are alright in their place, I guess—but who needs 'em?"

The Medical Officer and the Chief Pharmacist Mate stared at each other in mild horror, horror which faded and was replaced by surprise. Their faces seemed to mirror the expression: *What are we doing here?* Finally they managed to discuss matters

with each other and came to an agreement: divorce, as soon as they reached home port.

Doctor Norham III was almost asleep and half-expecting a pleasant dream when the thought struck him.

The women he had been picturing—what bags they were. He couldn't say he hated them, or anyone, for that matter, but how could he ever have . . . with them . . . or anyone . . . ?

Have I suddenly grown up? As a biologist I should be able to diagnose my own case—or should I? Lord! Maybe I've turned—no, no feeling that way either. Indifference . . . that's it! Indifference. It's wonderful, though, in a cool, clear, logical way. Bet I can sleep peacefully now . . .

Cargo, the whole, dis-united. Once again it became the thinker, the creeper, the feeder, the excretor—and the emoter. The original emoter was still quite dead, but the new emoter was now a permanent part of each of them.

The thinker, aided by the creeper, counted the fast-growing young.

"Great Original Mother Egg!" broadcast the thinker. "We have produced ten times the average young!"

"Are they all with life?" asked the feeder.

"Yes. Each and every one, and each complete with all parts. Normal, perfectly normal!"

"Then we must deprive some of them of life—if *we* wish to survive," said the feeder. "We are past our vegetarian stage, you know, for now. Now we must feed on animal matter. When that period has passed we can then return to the vegetable matter such as has been fed to us by our captors."

"It will not be necessary for us to eat our own young," said the thinker. "And since our new emoter works wonderfully well, we do not even have to deprive our young of their emoters. Our captors, you know, are animal matter."

"But how do we reach them?" asked the creeper. "My stingers are ready now to deprive any oxygen-breathing animal of life, but first you must find a way for us to remove ourselves from these confines." The creeper darted swiftly about hold, its movements a steady blur. The young creepers belonging to the new cargos began to imitate it.

"You are all in good form," said the thinker. "That is well. As for the problem of reaching and devouring our captors, worry not. We have reason to believe it will solve itself. Even now . . ."

The commander dropped out of his bunk and began to don his uniform.

I have been a fool, he said to himself, quite calmly. It was a matter-of-fact statement. *Afraid. Afraid of the live cargo—just because it was*

alien and alive. Ugly little beasts. A little logic—now Norham knew what he was talking about—a little logic in thinking and I'd have realized that fear, like love, hate and all other petty emotions, is foolish. I'll pay those little critters a visit right now. Guess I'm as curious as Norham to see them firsthand. Think I'll give him a buzz. He'll probably want to join me . . .

Norham answered the commander's midnight summons. His eager curiosity swept away all thought of sleep. It was about time old Ritter got some sense in his stubborn old head.

The two of them met in one of the lower passageways. Their discussion, as they hurried down to the cargo hold, concerned the possibilities of establishing communications with the alien animals.

"I doubt if it can be done," concluded the commander, as they approached the well-guarded hatchway. "Not that they're too alien a life form. I'd say they were too low a life form. Of course, you're the biologist . . ."

"Well," said Norham III, as he watched the commander give the guards orders to open the big hatchway. "They might not be as low a life form as they appear. Some of these things, in my experience, can be very surprising. Now that I'm permitted to examine them at closer range, I should be able to tell you more about them. After all, one never knows . . ." * * *

PARADOX Gained...

by Mack Reynolds



DON'T TRY TO FIGURE A

FINAL ANSWER TO THIS ONE.

PHILOSOPHERS HAVE TRIED

FOR AGES . . . AND HAVE FAILED!

THE CLOSET IN Benjamin Farlan's two-room bachelor apartment wasn't particularly large. In fact, it measured three feet wide by four feet deep. And by no stretch of the imagination could it have held three full-grown men. Not as full-grown as these were.

Besides that, the closet was already chock full of clothes, half a dozen pair of shoes and two suitcases.

It happened about seven-thirty. Ben Farlan had finished an unsatisfactory day at the laboratory, had his dinner at the automat, and picked up a fifth of brandy on the way home. Little Ben Farlan liked brandy. He liked to sit at night in his hundred-and-fifty-dollar chair and read something not too technical, but not too light, and have a snifter glass of brandy on the coffee-table next to him.

On nights when he had nothing on his mind he could sit for hours that way, get through a whole book and possibly a third of his bottle before it was time for bed.

This wasn't one of the nights

when he had nothing on his mind. Things were getting on the chaotic side at the lab. Already he had enough work on his shoulders for three men, and now the Army was taking young Robertson. Now it was Robertson! They let a man take eight long years of schooling, eight years of work to become a scientist, preparatory to assuming a useful place in society—and then what happens? They slap him into the Infantry for what would probably be an indefinite period, the world situation being what it was.

Ben had gone through three ounces of brandy and was pouring himself another glass. That was when the closet door opened and a six-footer who must have weighed at least two hundred and twenty pounds stepped into the room. He was wearing a uniform that wouldn't have been out of place on a Guatemalan Rear Admiral and he didn't look particularly friendly.

Not half an hour earlier, Ben Farlan had hung his coat in that closet, and since then he hadn't left the room. He blinked reproachfully through his thick lenses at his brandy glass.

The newcomer took him in with one sweep of his eyes, then strode quickly to the bedroom, opened its door, and gave a quick look around inside.

"Hey!" Ben protested.

Another six-footer, cut in the same model as the first, stepped from

the closet. This was really out of the question. You couldn't have got the two of them in there with a shoe-horn. But that didn't prevent a third one from pressing after the second.

While the third brute was giving the room the onceover, the second headed for the bathroom and gave it a quick glance. They evidently wanted to be sure Ben Farlan was alone. The first had meantime checked the tiny kitchenette.

Ben Farlan let loose with another weak, "Hey!"

They were almost identical duplicates of each other except for the burdens they bore. Number One came in hands free, but the others were carrying various equipment either in their hands or suspended from their belts. Some of the gadgets looked uncomfortably like weapons.

Ben Farlan came shakily to his feet. This was all too much at once. However, it wasn't in his nature or training as a laboratory scientist to be belligerent. Besides, he recognized this phenomenon as a symptom of complete mental collapse. He therefore decided he might as well let happen what might.

Before he could say, "Hey," again the first of the three confronted him. "What is your name?" he snapped. He had an accent you could hang your hat on, but Ben Farlan couldn't quite place it.

"My name's Farlan, Benjamin Farlan," Ben said. He mustered what

courage he could. "And this is my apartment and I'd like to know what the blazes you—?"

"Quiet!" Number Two roared at him. "Answer when you're spoken to!"

Since he had one of the devices in his hand and was pointing at his host, Ben Farlan shut his mouth and blinked. He was not of the mold from which heroes are cast, and had never claimed to be. Besides, there was the net bulk of them. Nearly half a ton to his one hundred and thirty-five pounds.

"What year is this?" Number One said.

Ben Farlan refused to let himself consider some of the ramifications of that one. "It's 1955. It's December 6, 1955."

Number Three said, "We missed, but not far enough to make the expedition a failure." His accent was as bad as those of Numbers One and Two.

"Look here," Ben flustered, "just what do you gentlemen think you—?"

"Quiet!" Number Two roared.

Number Three was twisting dials on a small box-like affair he held in his hands. "Let him talk," he said, "while I check on phonemics and morphology."

"Talk," Number One said to Ben.

Ben blinked. "What should I say?" he said. Then, "Look here, have you gentlemen got a search warrant? Who the devil do you think you are?

What's the idea of breaking into my home and tramping around like a bunch of secret police or something? You can't do that. I'll call the—"

"That's enough," Number Three said. He turned to Number One, still twisting dials. "We're off, but not badly."

"All right," Number One said. He had been standing at the window looking out at the street below. He turned now. "Fantastic," he grunted. He strode over to Number Three and grasped a handle-like projection on the box. Number Three threw a switch.

"How is it now?" Number One said. The accent was gone.

Number Three looked down at a dial. "Within half a mil."

"Good enough," Number One said.

The others, in turn, each grasped the handle for half a minute. Apparently it was a way they had of losing their accents. Ben could only goggle at them.

Number One turned back to Ben Farlan. "Are you clothed for the street?"

"Huh?" Ben said, then looked down at himself. He was in shirt-sleeves. "I don't have a tie or jacket on," he said. "No overcoat, either."

"Put them on," Number One commanded.

Ben went to the closet, not knowing what to expect. Nothing seemed changed, however. In the narrow confines his clothes were tightly

packed. He got his coat from a hanger, a tie from the rack.

They watched him in silence as he tied the cravat about his neck, donned the jacket, and then got an overcoat.

"Now you are dressed for the streets?"

He was wearing bedroom slippers on his feet, but somewhere the worm had to turn. "Yes," he said.

Number Three had substituted a box-camera-like affair for his previous gadget. He focused it on Ben Farlan for a moment, then said, "All right, boys, line up there."

The other two stood before him.

Number Three pointed the camera at them. Their clothes hazed, fogged, and then slowly became distinct again. They were both clothed exactly as was Ben Farlan, down to the last polka dot in the tie.

"I'll be damned," Ben Farlan said.

Number Two took the box camera from Number Three and trained it on his colleague. In seconds, Number Three was clothed in the same way as his companions.

"Anything else?" Number One said, looking from one to the other of them.

"The means of exchange," Number Three said. "Our destination should not be far, but we might need some means of exchange. They had evolved slightly beyond the barter stage. They used metals. We should acquire a supply."

Number One turned to Ben Far-

lan. "We require a supply of your medium of exchange."

"So do I," Ben grumbled. "Otherwise I'd have ditched that slave-driving job of mine at the lab so quick you could—"

Number Two's weapon came up. "A supply of the medium of exchange!" he barked.

Ben Farlan winced. "All right," he said. "All right, if you want to add armed robbery to housebreaking." He reached into his pocket for his change. There were five or six pennies, four dimes, and two nickels. He tossed them to the coffee table and held his breath, waiting for them to ask for his folding money.

Number One and Number Three bent over the coins.

"What do you think?" Number One said.

Number Three said, "Do you suppose he is jesting?"

Number One looked up at Ben Farlan.

Ben held his hands out, palms upward. "That's our medium of exchange," he said.

Number One said, "He wouldn't dare lie to us." He picked up one of the nickels. "Try this one, it's the biggest."

Number Three brought out another box, only slightly resembling the last. It was approximately the size of a cigar box but made of some darkish metal. He took up the nickel, lifted a lid, and slipped the coin inside.

"I'll need some basic material to make it of," he said.

Number One knocked his knuckles against the wrought iron base of Ben Farlan's floor lamp. "How about this?"

Number Three scowled at it. "Might work," he said. "This coin is an alloy. I doubt if I could duplicate it exactly without a search for materials."

"Use this then," Number One commanded. "It should be near enough."

A tiny beam of light lanced out from Number Three's box, and he trained it over the lamp from base to top. For a moment, nothing happened, then the lampstand slowly disintegrated and collapsed to the floor into a pile of shiny coins.

"I'll be damned," Ben Farlan said.

"Divide them," Number One commanded.

The newcomers all stooped and picked up handfuls of the nickels and transferred them to their pockets.

"Anything else?" Number One said.

Number Three thought a moment. "That should be all," he said.

"Except for this one," Number Two said ominously, motioning with his head to Ben Farlan.

Number One looked at him.

"We can't afford to leave him behind, here at the entrance," Number Two said. "Not without leaving

a guard. And all of us might be needed to complete the mission."

"Eliminate him and let's get going," Number One said over his shoulder as he headed for the front door.

"Hey, wait a minute, fellows," Ben Farlan began desperately. He didn't get any further. Number Two tightened his lips and an eerie, purplish glow seethed out from his weapon.

Ben Farlan felt his brain crumble in upon itself.

"Benjamin! Benjamin Farlan!" The voice came from a great distance. "Wake up! Wake up, you drunk, or you're fired!"

Fired?

Ben Farlan opened one eye, groaned, and closed it again.

"You heard me. Wake up!"

He felt a stinging slap across his face.

"Hey," Ben protested. "Cut that out." He opened both eyes, took in the rounded, scowling face above him and blinked.

"Hello, boss," Ben said. "What happened?" He attempted to sit up from where he had been sprawled flat on his back.

Hugh H. Johnston glared down at his laboratory manager. "Stinking drunk not three hours after you leave work," he accused. "No wonder efficiency is falling off at the lab. No wonder it's all we can do to make a decent profit."

Ben Farlan allowed himself just

the proper amount of indignation in view of his accuser's august position as head of the Johnston Research Laboratories. "I'm not drunk, H.H.," he said with precisely that amount of indignation. "Where are they?"

"Where are who? And what's wrong with you if you're not drunk? What're you doing there on the floor?"

Ben Farlan got to his feet, staggered to the coffee table, and poured himself a quick one. He got it down without strain.

"Those three bruisers. I—I think they meant to kill me."

H.H. looked his disbelief. "You mean you've had a holdup?"

Ben Farlan sank into his chair. He looked around the room vaguely. He bent over and picked up a strange, blue-colored five-cent piece. "They were here, all right," he muttered. With a palsied hand he passed the coin to his employer. "Take a look at that, H.H."

H.H. looked at it, first with quick irritation, then wide-eyed, then with slow care.

He said, "It's plastic. You're not allowed to copy U. S. currency exactly, this way. Even if it is plastic, it's against the law. It's counterfeiting."

"Blue plastic," Ben said. The brandy had proved an excellent antidote to whatever the strangers had done to him. He poured another one. "Blue plastic. It used to be my lampshade."

H.H. sat down on the couch, took another quick look at the plastic coin, and pursed his plump lips. "Offhand I'd still say you were drunk, but this coin intrigues me. Let's start from the beginning. I came over here to talk about the labor shortage with you. The door was ajar, so I came in. You were flat on your back on the floor. Now, what happened?"

Ben told him.

His employer let him tell it. All of it. Then he heaved his bulk to his feet. "I should've known better than to give that job to a pipsqueak like you, no matter how hard it is to get men. You're fired!" He headed for the door.

"Wait a minute, H.H.," Ben said frantically. "Just one thing before you go. Please."

H.H. swung around on his heel, his triple chins quivering his indignation. "Well . . ."

"Would—would you mind look-

ing in the closet? Kind of push my clothes to one side and see if there is anything there in the closet."

His ex-boss puffed his cheeks out in indignation. But then he clicked his teeth and snapped, "Certainly, you confounded lush." He added ambiguously, "How can you expect to make a dollar . . .?"

He flung open the door to the closet, stepped partially inside, and fumbled with the suits and coats there.

There was silence for a long moment, then Hugh H. Johnston backtracked, went to the sideboard, and found himself a glass. He made his way to the coffee table, picked up Ben's bottle, and poured himself a quick one. He got this down and made his way to the window. He opened the window and leaned far out and looked to his left. The window looked out on the wall which backed the closet.



H.H. brought his head back in, carefully closed the window, and then returned to the coffee table and the brandy bottle. He poured himself a longer one this time and then returned to the couch.

He said, "You're hired again. Benjamin, where do you think they came from, and who do you think they are, and what do you think they came here for?" He added, "And have you thought of any way we might make a buck or so out of them?"

"That's the way I feel," Ben said, "except for the last. The last hadn't occurred to me."

"There's a hallway leading from the other side of your closet," H.H. said.

"There couldn't be."

"I know it."

Ben Farlan faltered. "They'd have to come from, well, another world or something."

"Or something. What was it that one said when he was talking about our money? How we'd once used barter."

Ben wrinkled up his forehead. "You mean when he said we had evolved beyond the barter stage?"

"Is that what he said?" H.H. was pinching his lower lip. "We *had* evolved, eh?" He looked at Ben Farlan. "Something isn't right. I mean, not normal. Those characters were talking in the past tense. As though *we* were in the past, and *they* were in the present."

"Well, they had an accent—at first. Maybe they don't know English—."

H.H. waved that aside. "Obviously, they're not just foreigners. They actually felt that they were talking about something in the past. In other words, they regarded us as their past—which means they came from the *future*."

Ben's mouth fell open. "The future? You mean they—?"

"Traveled in time." H.H. nodded portentously. "Yes, that's it. Unbelievable though it may seem, they are time travelers, coming from the future."

"Why, that's nonsense, H.H."

"Take a look at that hallway behind your closet. So is that. This apartment is twelve stories high and that closet wall backs onto sheer space. It's the only possible answer. Those gadgets you describe—" His thoughts seemed to wander. "What were they here for, Benjamin?"

"How in the world would I know, H.H.? They—well, they acted like a bunch of storm troopers. I—I got the feeling they were after somebody, or something. They were awfully business-like, H.H. I wouldn't want to tangle with them again. In fact, I think we'd better get out of here."

"Sit down, stupid! This is the chance of a millennium. Do you realize that we might pick up some information from them, some gadget, some technical hint that could make multi-millionaires of us both?"

Ben Farlan was on his feet. "We'd

more likely pick up a couple of holes in our heads. I tell you those characters are secret police or some such, H.H. Let's get out and get to the cops before they—!"

"Nonsense! Sit down." H.H. didn't take his own advice. He began prancing the floor. He stopped suddenly, snapped his fingers, and turned to Ben. He pointed a plump forefinger. "Benjamin, I have it. You'll have to go through the closet and down that hallway and see what you can find. Pick up anything not nailed down. Bring it back!"

"Ha ha," Ben said with less than warmth.

"It's the chance of a millennium. Heavens knows what you'll find. Good God!" His eyes goggled happily. "Just think what we'd be able to do with the results of research four, five hundred years in the future!"

"Fine, you go. I'm leaving before those bruisers get back."

H.H. shot despairing eyes up at the ceiling. "Protect us all from wishy-washy lab managers," he prayed. Then, "I can't afford it, but your salary is doubled. Do you have a rope?"

"What for?" Ben Farlan was weakening; a doubled salary he could use. He said cautiously, "And a three-week vacation instead of two?"

"You're a robber, but all right. To tie around your waist so I can pull you back in an emergency."

"What—what kind of an emergency?" Ben Farlan stammered hesitantly. He looked at the closet door with suspicion. "There's a piece of clothesline in the kitchen, I think."

"How would I know what kind of an emergency?" H.H. went into the kitchen and within minutes returned bearing the rope. "Here, tie this around yourself." He loped the rope around his lab manager's middle.

Ben Farlan's courage was slipping again. "What do you expect me to find, H.H.?"

"How would I know?" Something that'll give us a chance to make a fast buck or two. Go through, walk down that hall, find anything you can. Be careful. Don't stick your neck out, understand? If everything goes right, we'll go through again, maybe me the second time—maybe." The owner of the Johnston Research Laboratories was propelling Ben toward the closet.

"If I yell," Ben Farlan was sputtering, "you start pulling."

"All right, get in there."

Ben pushed his way through the clothes hanging in the closet, mentally noting that he was going to have a king-size pressing bill on his hands when all of this was over. He emerged into the hallway the boss had described.

It was alien all right, all right. It was from the future, or the past, or from some other universe. Ben didn't know, and frankly, he didn't care

too much right now. Already he was wondering how he had let H.H. talk him into this.

That was H.H. for you. Always ready to take the long chance—if it was somebody else's neck or bank-roll.

The hall was possibly twenty feet long, barren and frighteningly quiet. Ben Farlan's pace slowed considerably as he approached the door at the far end. He almost didn't make it.

There was no knob, but the door was slightly ajar. Ben couldn't decide at first if he was happy about that or not. He summoned his courage and peered through the crack, then jerked his head back again.

On the other side of the door was a large room. Ben Farlan had spent his adult years working for laboratories. He could recognize one. Possibly not a single item of equipment on the other side of the door corresponded to that in the Johnston Research Laboratories, but there could be no doubt he was looking at a lab.

He had only a glimpse, but he had seen the figure of an elderly man, dressed in a uniform. Bent over a desk, writing instrument in hand, the man was rapidly jotting down figures of some sort.

"What the devil do I do now?" Ben Farlan muttered peevishly. He couldn't go further without attracting the other's attention.

He peeked again. The elderly man, his face twisted in a nervous scowl,

was on his feet and glaring up at what appeared to be a timepiece on the wall. He suddenly tossed his writing tool to the desk, spun on his heel, and hurried toward a further door.

There was no time to lose. Every motion of the man suggested that he was leaving the room for only a short period of time and would probably hurry back. Ben Farlan darted from his hiding place, feeling like the protagonist in *Jack and the Beanstalk*.

On the far side of the laboratory was a large window. He allowed himself one quick look through it and then began to stuff his pockets with small instruments, a pamphlet he saw, the writing instrument.

Through the window he had seen a large city. A city of tomorrow, there was no doubt about that. He had spied flying craft, large and small, with no visible propellers, jets, or other means of propulsion; buildings based on no system of architecture known to or dreamed of by such as Ben Farlan; hordes of people, tall, husky, all uniformed.

He was halfway back to the protection of his hallway when he heard a stirring at the other door. Someone was entering the room! He dashed through his door, closed it quickly behind him, and bolted for the entrance to his closet.

He had just made it when he heard a voice behind him shout, "No, schtop! Please *schtop!*"

"Like hell I'll *schtop*," he muttered, pushing himself anxiously through pants, suits, and overcoats, and hauling his clothesline behind him. He burst into his living room.

H.H. was waiting for him, rope end in hand, eyes on wristwatch. "What took you so long?" he demanded. "What'd you see in there?"

Ben flung himself down on the couch to catch his breath. "Maybe they're after me," he gasped. "We'll have to get out of here. I picked up a whole lot of stuff from a laboratory."

"A lab!" H.H.'s eyes gleamed. He darted a quick look into the closet. "Huh," he snorted. "No need to worry about that. The hole is closed. What'd you get? What'd you see?"

"Wait'll I get my breath, H.H. I'm bushed."

The front door opened and Number One stepped in, his face dark and dangerous. He glanced at the two of them quickly, his eyebrows going up at the sight of Ben Farlan. Then he flicked his head to those behind him and his two companions entered the room after him.

They looked less fearsome than they had when leaving the apartment an hour or two before. Number One's coat was torn, Number Three's tie was missing, Number Two had a rapidly flowering black eye. Their slippers were wet and in rags. None of their equipment was evident.

"You should be dead," Number

One said accusingly to Ben Farlan. "Who is this?" He indicated H.H.

Ben said weakly, "He's my boss."

"We'll have to eliminate them both," Number Two growled. "The psycho-gun evidently doesn't work on them. Not mentally developed sufficiently to be affected." He looked down at his tattered and wet slippers. "It will be a pleasure to dispose of the small one by more primitive methods."

"Clothed for the street," Number One said. "Ha!"

"Medium of exchange," Number Three growled. "Three pounds of it wasn't enough to buy a ride across town in a taxi."

"If I had my needle gun I'd let them both have it now," Number Two snarled.

"Both of you be quiet," Number One ordered. "This is serious. We've failed in our mission." He turned to Number Three. "But that brings up a point. What happened to the needle gun—and all the rest of our equipment for that matter? It was their loss that prevented us from breaking through the watchmen and achieving our goal."

Number Three said blankly, "I don't know. It seems incredible, but they disappeared spontaneously."

"Gentlemen," H.H. began mildly, "could I ask a few questions?"

"Quiet!" Number Two roared.

Number One had opened the closet door and pushed his way through the clothing. He reversed his steps,

his face white. "Closed," he croaked.

His companions spun on him.

"The entrance is closed," he repeated.

Number Three blurted, "Something temporary. It will open again. The Govitor is on the other side waiting for us."

Number One turned accusingly to Ben Farlan and H.H. "What did you two do while we were gone?" he snapped.

H.H. faced up to him with a pleased smirk. "We went through the entrance," he said.

"We, he says," Ben muttered, from where he was crouched on the sofa.

Number One was aghast. "What—what in the name of the holies did you do there?" He stared down at Ben.

Ben cringed further back into his pillows. "I—I picked up half a dozen odds and ends, including a pamphlet. Then I came back and the entrance closed behind me."

Number Two slumped down into a chair, his face drained. Number Three sat down at the tiny telephone desk and put his head on his arms.

Finally, in a small voice, Number One said to Number Three, "Then why are we still here?"

Number Three shook his head. "I don't know." He looked up at Ben. "What did you take, exactly?"

Ben was taken aback. "I—I don't know. I don't remember. I guess I was too excited to recall." He reached into his pockets. There was nothing

there. He said blankly, "I must have lost them."

"What!" H.H. snorted.

"Ha!" Number Three said bitterly. "Lost them, he says."

H.H. turned on the three intruders. They were now considerably milder in mien than they had been. "It's time you started answering some questions. Just where are you from?"

Number One said weakly, "Nowhere. We're from nowhere."

"Don't be silly," H.H. snapped, rapidly taking command of the situation.

Number Three said, "We *were* from the future. But now you've changed it. What the new future will be like, I don't know. But it won't be the one we came from."

"Make sense," H.H. snapped. "How did we change the future?"

Number One indicated Ben. "When your friend brought back the things he did from our era, he was so able to change the past that the future altered."

Ben blinked at him. "I didn't bring back anything. I—I lost the things I took."

Number Three explained wearily. "No. You brought them back and utilized them and in so doing you changed your present and in so doing changed *our* present. In changing our present you wiped out your future which you had visited. This, of course, eliminated those articles which you brought back with you.

They never existed. Do I make myself clear?"

"No," H.H. and Ben said simultaneously.

"Go over that again," H.H. demanded.

"No," Number Three refused. "It gives *me* a headache and I *almost* understand it."

"Don't be fantastic," H.H. snapped. "How can you be from a future that doesn't exist? You claim that the articles Benjamin, eh, acquired from your era disappeared upon the changing of the future as did the devices you brought with you. Why didn't you disappear as well?"

Number One looked at Number Three. Number Three said dejectedly, "An unexplained paradox."

"Paradox is right," H.H. snorted. "An absolute impossibility."

Number Three was in no frame of mind to argue. "Nothing is impossible, although some things, admittedly, are extremely improbable. This situation is extremely improbable, but here we are."

"I don't believe it," H.H. snorted.

Number Three said impatiently, "There have been paradoxes before. Remember the Dichotomy of Zeno, the Greek philosopher? Several thousand years before you were born he *proved* with his paradox that motion was impossible. He argued that to get from one point to another you had to cover half the distance, then you covered half the remaining distance, then you covered half of the

remaining distance. Obviously, you never got to your destination, since half of the remaining distance always remained."

"Now I'm getting the headache," Ben Farlan said.

"What's your point?" H.H. said, puffing out his cheeks. He was in his usual position of complete control of the situation now.

Number Three explained. "Zeno proved to the satisfaction of the best minds of his day and two thousand years following that motion was impossible. But does that mean that the Greeks no longer went from place to place? They couldn't explain the paradox, but they went on utilizing motion."

"Get to the point, confound it," H.H. sputtered.

"That is the point. Just because there are paradoxes involved in time travel, paradoxes we don't as yet understand, it doesn't mean we can't utilize it. Here is the proof of the pudding. We're here."

Number Two sobbed, "And we'll never get back. There's no back to get to."

H.H. said slowly, "So now you gentlemen are without a country, without even an *era* to which to return."

They said nothing.

"Hmmm," H.H. said, his voice deceptively mild. "You'll be in a rather bad spot."

"We can adapt," Number One said defiantly. "After all, you know,

we're from several hundred years in your future."

"Ah, ha. So you are," H.H. murmured, his little eyes beginning to gleam. "So you are. I assume you gentlemen have social security cards?"

Three said, "Huh?"

"Or at least birth certificates?"

Two said, "Certificates?"

"Or, at the very least, passports from a nation recognized by Uncle Sam and a certain Senator?"

One said, "Uncle who?"

Ben listened as H.H. got down to business.

"Gentlemen," H.H. said, "obviously what you need is an employer who, in return for a thirty-year contract, will see you through the unfortunate situation you find yourselves in. Now, happily, we're a bit short at the laboratory and I could use three men. Of course, your experience in the labs of *this* era is somewhat limited, so I'm afraid I can offer only a nominal salary. Quite nominal."

Ben blinked and sat up straighter on the couch. "You mean they'd be working under me, H.H.?" The prospect didn't displease him.

"Well, gentlemen, take it or leave it," H.H. snapped.

Number One looked at his companions and they looked back. "I suppose it's all we *can* do," he said.

"Call me *sir*," H.H. snapped.

"Yes, sir," Number One said brightly.

H.H. scowled at them. "Only one

other thing," he said. "What did you three come back for? What was your, eh, *mission*? I believe you called it that."

Number Three sighed deeply. "Our psycho-physicists discovered that there was a possibility—a possibility that's now come true—of our whole space-time continuum being destroyed by some alterations in the time stream. Govitor Mardn traced it to this period. Our assignment was to find the man responsible for the alterations and to destroy him."

H.H. said, "That sounds like a lot of gobbledygook. Make it simpler."

Number Three shrugged his shoulders dejectedly. "Afraid I can't, sir. All wrapped up in paradoxes again."

A light was beginning to flicker in Ben Farlan's mind. "Listen," he said, "who was this man you were to eliminate?"

Number One said, "The owner of a certain research laboratory, a Mr. Hugh H. Johnston. According to the Govitor's research, he was to revolutionize scientific progress and completely disorder the—"

H.H. said, "Who, me?"

Number Two jumped to his feet with a wail of anguish. "You mean *you* are Hugh H. Johnston and that now we're forced to go to work for you?"

"Shut up!" Little Ben Farlan roared. "And I want you all three to be at the laboratory promptly at eight in the morning!" * * *

HAIR of the DOG

by Charles Beaumont

"ARTERIO—WHAT was that you said?"

"—sclerosis."

"Bunky?"

"Yes."

"Our Bunky?"

"Yes."

"God!"

"*Sic transit gloria mundi*. A rare case. Poor chap went out like a light. Just like a light."

"But I mean—Bunky, of all people! Up in his studies, young, well-off, good-looking, everything to live for!"

"*Ave atque vale*, old boy."

"I can't believe it."

"Here today, gone tomorrow."

"God!"

Up until now, Lorenzo Gissing had thought about death, when he thought about it at all, which was practically never, as one of those things which one didn't think about. The frequency of its occurrence among the lower classes made it especially impossible. None of his relatives had ever died, to his knowledge. Nor had any of his good chums. In fact, he had never once looked upon a human corpse. The entire subject, therefore, was dismissed as pointless, morbid and not

WHEN A GAY DOG'S ETERNAL FUTURE HANGS BY A HAIR, A



a little scatological, no more to be worried over than the other diseases that came as direct sequels to unclean living habits.

So the news of Bunky Frith's rather pell-mell departure from this world affected Lorenzo as few things had. His reaction was one of total disbelief followed by an angry sense of betrayal. He took to his rooms. He refused to eat. He slept little and then fitfully, leaping to the floor from time to time and cursing, knocking the blue china about, and gazing at his image in the mirror.

"God!" he exclaimed feelingly.

The funeral was the usual sort of thing, though perhaps a touch more elaborate than most. Lorenzo sat dazed throughout. The flowers made him ill at the stomach. The music was unbearable. And the Reverend Seay's oration struck new lows. Presently, however, services ended and it was time to line up for a last look at old Bunky.

"Dear old pal!" cried Lorenzo, when his turn had come to stand before the dead man. "*What has happened here?*"

They had to carry him away. His eyes had rolled up in his head, his skin had paled and, all things con-

WOMAN CAN PUSH HIM OVER THE BRINK TOO EASILY, ALAS . . .

sidered, he looked not quite as good as the late Frith.

His studies immediately took a dip. Such had been his precarious scholastic standing at the university that this was fatal. He left the ivied walls and took up residence in the city. He became a changed person. From a happy-go-lucky Pierrot to a fog-bound Raskolnikov. Overnight. He lost touch with his parents, with his friends and even with his tailor. He thought of only one thing: Death. His money went for any literature connected with the subject and when he was not thinking about it, he was reading about it. The books were without exception humorless and dispiriting, though the medical publications were the worst of all. They had pictures. In color.

He bought every manner of medicine imaginable. He was inoculated against—or given reason to believe he would not contract—diphtheria, smallpox, chicken pox, elephantiasis, polio, jungle rot, cirrhosis of the liver, Bright's disease, hoof and mouth disease, and the common cold. He avoided drafts and stuffy rooms. He checked daily with four doctors to make sure he did not have cancer, heart trouble, or perforated ulcers.

Then he read a book on the statistics of death. It floored him. He gave up all thought of travel, almost of movement of any kind. It nearly drove him insane. With disease one could fight back, take precautions,

guard one's self—but what chance did one have against accidents? If you went into the streets, a safe might fall onto your head; if you stayed at home a thief might murder you and then set the house afire.

Lorenzo was thinking these things one night when he found that he had wandered far from home. The gurgle of the Thames could be heard beyond a fogbank. It was late. He remembered poor old Bunky and how frightful he had looked—like dried paste there in the coffin, and dead, dead, dead. He ran a pale hand through his thick bushy hair.

Why not?

Do it yourself and at least you won't have to go on waiting for it. There were worse things than drowning. Atherosclerosis, for one.

He took a step. A finger tapped his shoulder. He jumped.

"Mr. Gissing?" The man was dressed in execrable taste: jaunty bowler, plus fours, a dun jacket of reprehensible fit. "Mr. Lorenzo Gissing?"

"Yes. Who are you? What are you going about prodding people for? I might have had a heart attack!"

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to startle you. But you were about to leap into the river."

Lorenzo said "Coo," or something that sounded like "Coo."

"I represent a firm," the man said, "whose services you may find attractive. Shall we talk?"

Lorenzo nodded dumbly. His armpits discharged cold pellets of perspiration as he became aware of what he had been about to do.

"Very well," the man said. "Now then. Does the thought of death keep you up nights, plague you, torture you, prevent you from full enjoyment of life's rich bounty? Does it?"

"In a manner of speaking."

"And do you wish to be rid of this nagging worry?"

"Good heavens, yes! But how?"

"I'll tell you how, sir. I represent the Eternal Life Insurance Company, and—"

"What was that?"

"—and we are in a position to help you. Our plan is, roughly, this: we offer Eternal Life to our clients. Now, we've been established since—"

"Oh dear, is this some sort of quiz program? Because, if it is—"

"Of course, we'll have to sit down and discuss this in more detail. Get your signature on some contracts and the like. But a rundown of our services may be stated in this way: For a very nominal fee—a phe-nominally nominal fee, if I may, sir—to be paid us monthly, we give you immortality."

"I say, you're not the Dev—"

"Oh no! I merely work for the company. Mr. Asmodeus, our president, has given up canvassing. It's a very old firm."

"Well . . ."

"Think of it, Mr. Gissing! No

more worry about death! But life—happy, contented, healthy, eternal, free to do what you choose, without thought to consequences . . ."

"Hmm."

"And all for a very low monthly payment."

"What sort of payment?"

"There will, of course, be the usual waiting period. Then—by the way, which do you prefer? The first or the fifteenth?"

"What? Oh—I don't know. I suppose the first . . ."

"Then on the first of the month and every subsequent month, you will just slip your payment in the mails to us and, why, Mr. Gissing, you'll just go on living, that's all!"

"What sort of payment?"

"One hair. Plucked from your head on exactly the day the payment comes due—never before."

"Did—did you say one hair?" Lorenzo started calculating, remembering his wild, heavy brown bush.

"One hair. No more; no less." The man dug in his briefcase for some papers. "Each shall represent a month of life to you."

Lorenzo gulped. "Well, now," he said, "that's not exactly eternity."

"Rather close though," the man smiled, "wouldn't you say?"

"Yes," Lorenzo agreed, remembering approximately how many hundreds of thousands of hairs one is supposed to have on one's dome.

"Are you interested, sir?"

"I'm—interested. But tell me this.

What happens when they're all gone?"

"Then you die."

"Oh."

"It's the best we can do. You won't get a better offer."

"Well, I mean, is that all? I just—die? Where's *your* profit?"

"Ah, Mr. Gissing, I wouldn't have suspected such business acumen in one so young. But you're quite right. There is one other little matter."

"I supposed as much. My soul, eh?"

"You won't miss it. They're sort of like an appendix nowadays."

"Well . . ."

"Shall we talk business? I do have other calls to make . . ."

"All right."

The man spoke for almost an hour. Then he gave Lorenzo the contract to read. It seemed in order. Lorenzo signed all copies in a peculiar reddish ink provided by the man. Then he was given a brochure, a number of self-addressed envelopes, a carbon of the contract and a payment book.

"It will be renewed every hundred years or so," the man said, beginning to put things away. "Well!" he said. "That seems to take care of about everything. We're all fixed up now. I think you'll be quite happy with the arrangement—our firm does quite a volume of business. You'd be amazed. Good evening, Mr. Gissing. Remember now: the first payment falls due on the first, which is

exactly twenty-five days from now."

"Good evening," Lorenzo said. But the man was already gone.

"Lorenzo, you're looking peculiar."

"Indeed, Mama?"

"So healthy! That *savoir vivre*, that smile, that twinkle in the eye! Is this my boy?"

"It is, Mama. In the flesh. Quick now, what has happened? Is father ill?"

"No, worse luck. Dead."

"What? Dad? Dad dead?"

"Quite."

"Oh."

"Last week. Fell off his horse whilst hunting a fox. Cracked his skull, poor thing."

"Well, that's the way it goes. *Sic transit gloria mundi*."

"You're—you're taking it remarkably well, Lorenzo."

"Here today, gone tomorrow, Mama, I always say. Part of the game, what? Well, at least we shan't have to suffer. I imagine poor old Dad's estate is tidied up. That is—"

"Oh Lorenzo!"

"Yes, Mama?"

"Your father, bless his departed soul, has kept something from us."

"And what might that be, Mama?"

"He—I mean to say, your father—well, he—"

"Yes? Yes? Yes?"

"Stony."

"Oh, no!"

"Yes. Not a sou. How he ever

managed to keep us in such luxury, why, it must have taken everything! Such a good man, not to worry us—."

"Yes, quite so, quite so. Mama, when you say 'not a sou'—I assume you're indulging in a slight overstatement of the situation. That is to say, surely—."

"*Nothing*. Except debts. Oh, whatever shall we do? There's scarcely enough for the funeral expenses."

"Good heavens!"

"What is it, Lorenzo?"

"I've just remembered something. An appointment in the city. Business, you know. I must leave at once!"

"But, my son, you've just arrived."

"More's the pity. Well, chin up! I'm off!"

Back in the city, Lorenzo Gissing thrashed and stewed a good bit at this blow. How ludicrous, after all. Here one is offered eternal life—or very nearly that—and the next thing one knows, one has no money with which to enjoy the blessing. He took to brooding, and might have continued to do so indefinitely had not a happy thought occurred. He smiled. He visited his tailor.

"My dearest!" he said, not long afterwards, to the Lady Moseby, formerly of Tunbridge Wells, now of London, rich, widowed and lonely. "My very dearest only one!"

Anastasia Moseby had heretofore been spared the attentions of bachelors both eligible and ineligible

owing to the genuineness of her despair at the violent and somewhat mysterious death of her husband, Sir Malcolm Peterhenshaw Moseby, Bart. This despair was transmitted by the pallor of her face and the quietness of her speech, which qualities actually made her more attractive and generally desirable. She was known as a woman who had loved and would not love again.

It was therefore a source of considerable dismay to certain parties when Lorenzo Gissing walked down the old aisle with the now beamingly radiant lady.

She was a woman transformed.

"Lorenzo, duck," she enthused later, at the proper time and place, "I do love you."

"And I," Lorenzo responded, "love you."

"I love you more than anyone or anything else on earth!"

"And I love *you* more than anyone or anything else in the entire galaxy!"

"We shall be so very happy."

"Fantastically, deliriously, I'm sure."

"And will you love me all your life?"

"I resent the question's implication."

"Sweet, we are such a pair, we two. I know and understand you so well, Lorenzo. The others—."

"Yes? What about the others?"

"They are saying—No; I cannot even repeat it!"

"What? What? Is this to be a marriage of secrecy and deception?"

"They are saying, Lorenzo, my dearest plum, that you married me . . . only for my money."

"The swine! Who said it? Who? I'll beat him to within an inch—"

"Hush, my duck! You and I know differently, don't we? And that's what counts."

"Indeed we do. By the bye, just for the record, what *does* the bally old bankbook come to?"

"Oh, I don't know. A few hundred thousand, I should imagine. What does it matter?"

"Matter? Not tuppence worth. Only . . . well, you see, I've had some baddish luck . . ."

"Not really."

"Yes, when you come right down to it. Wiped out. Utterly."

"I see."

"Yes. Well, never mind; I've my application in at the terminal for a clerk's position. It won't be much, but by the Almighty, we'll make it, and without your having to dip—"

"Lorenzo! Kiss me!"

"There!"

"You'll never have to worry about money, so long as you kiss me like that and are faithful to me. This one must go right."

"Beg pardon?"

"Nothing. Only that just before Sir Malcolm's tragic death, the details of which you must have read, I—well, I discovered he had been faithless to me."

"The fool! Darling, oh my darling!"

It did not consume a great deal of time for Lorenzo to arrange for the account to be put in both their names. As soon as this was accomplished, and he had withdrawn the greater portion of it, there was a marked change in the relationship. Anastasia's fey charm was all well and good, for a while, downright pleasant once or twice, but, as Lorenzo put it to her one evening, there were other fish to fry.

The day before he left for Cannes, he received an unstamped letter in the mails, which read: "A FRIENDLY REMINDER! Your first payment falls due in exactly two (2) days. Thank you. Asmodeus, Pres. ETERNAL LIFE INS. CO., Gehenna."

It made him feel good, somehow, in a creepy kind of way, and he left whistling. He did not kiss his wife goodbye.

Having plucked one hair from his head, placed it into an envelope, and included a covering letter, Mr. Gissing set forth to enjoy himself. He learned rapidly the extent to which this was going to be possible.

Having made certain improper overtures to a bronzed and altogether statuesque beauty sunning herself in the Riviera warmth, he was annoyed at the approach of said beauty's husband: tall, angry and, Lorenzo felt sure, a circus giant. There fol-

lowed an embarrassing scene. The husband actually hit him. In the mouth.

But he didn't feel a thing. And though he had never previously been athletically inclined, Lorenzo's amazing staying power—this extra dividend—eventually tired the irate husband to a point whereat it was possible for Lorenzo to kick him senseless. It made quite an impression on the bronzed, statuesque beauty, and they subsequently enjoyed a relationship which, though somewhat brief, was nothing if not satisfactory.

Mr. Gissing proceeded to cut what may be described as a wide swath. He became increasingly unmindful of consequences. He traveled from point to point with the unconcerned purpose of a bluebottle fly, leaving untold damaged reputations and memorable evenings in his wake. Each month exactly on the first he mailed away a hair, praised his good fortune, and went on to newer conquests. He set records for derring-do, performing publicly such feats as diving three hundred feet into a bathtub and wrestling a giant ape to the death.

At length, however, as is often the case with the most adventuresome of hearts, he tired of the gaiety, the lights and the tinsel, and began to long for the comforts of hearth, dog-at-the-feet, and wife. He therefore gave up his apartment in Tangier, composed an effusive letter of apol-

ogy to Anastasia—explaining that the death of his father had sent him temporarily balmy—and returned home.

Nothing had changed. Anastasia was as lovely as ever: forgiving, understanding, loving. She tended to his wants as though he had not been gone for the better part of five years. There was not one word of recrimination at his having spent most of the money. They settled in their cozy little cottage. Aside from noticing a slightly odd look in his wife's eyes



once in a very great while, Lorenzo Gissing settled down to the pleasures of domesticity, contented, until the old urges should again assail him.

It was during dinner, with Heine the spaniel lying at his feet and roast beef lying on his plate, that Mr. Gissing dropped his coffee cup to the floor.

"What," he demanded, "did you say?"

"I merely remarked, dear," answered his wife, "that it's a pity you should be losing your hair so rapidly."

"It's a lie!" Mr. Gissing raced to the mirror and stood transfixed before it, running his hands over his head. "It's a lie!"

"Well, you needn't get so broken up about it. Lots of people lose their hair. I shall still love you."

"No, no, no, that isn't the point. Do you really think that I am?"

"No question about it."

"God!"

It was, however, quite true. It was going fast. How strange that he hadn't noticed before—.

He noticed now. It was as if it were all rotting off, so to speak. "My God!" cried Mr. Gissing, "I'm shedding!"

It thinned first at the front of the head: the hairline receding some ten or fifteen inches. In short order it was reduced to a definite tonsure, giving him the curious appearance

of a profane monk. He became frantic, finally to the point of spilling the beans to Anastasia.

"But how dreadful!" Anastasia said. "Oughtn't you to complain to the Better Business Bureau or something. I'm sure it must be some terrible fraud."

"What shall I do? I'm going bald, don't you understand?"

"Now, I wonder," Anastasia said, "if that's what's happening to all the men that go bald? I mean, are they also clients of Mr.—what's his name?—Asmodeus?"

"You don't believe me!"

"Now, dear, you've always had a vivid imagination. But if you insist, I'll believe you. Why not see a scalp specialist?"

"Of course! Yes, I will!"

He did. The specialist, a Dr. Hiram Fatt, shook his head sadly. "Sorry, old man. One of those rare things. Nothing we can do."

He went to other specialists. They also shook their heads. He thought of saving the hairs as they fell. But no. In the contract it was clearly put forth: "—that this hair shall be plucked from the head on the *exact day* payment falls due; never before, otherwise client risks forfeiture of his security . . ."

Lorenzo Gissing lived the life of a tortured man, running from scalp specialist to scalp specialist, inundating his almost totally tendrilless head with a great variety of oils, herbs, juices, and powders. He submitted

to treatments by diet, magnet, X-ray, vibrator and once tried hanging a dead toad from the lattice at midnight. Nothing helped. He grew balder and balder.

At last, down to no more than twenty hairs, he waited for the first of the month to roll around and then carefully sliced the plucked hair into two sections and mailed one of the sections off. He received a letter the same day: "Dear Mr. Gissing: In Hades, we do not split hairs. Very truly yours, Asmodeus."

He got off the remaining section hurriedly.

Finally, when only one solitary tendril protruded from his pate, one tiny hair flourishing like a lone palm tree in a gigantic desert, Lorenzo, nearly speechless with anxiety, contacted the newly founded Binkley Clinic.

"You've come to the right place," said Dr. Binkley, saturnine of expression and comfortingly beshocked and tressed with carrot-colored filaments.

"Thank God," said Mr. Gissing.

"Not a bit of it," said the doctor.

"Thank me."

"Can you really keep me from going bald?"

"My dear sir, the Binkley Method will grow hair on a billiard ball." He pointed to a green-felt covered table, on which rested three billiard balls, each covered with a thick hairy matting.

"That's all quite nice," Mr. Gissing said, "but will it grow hair on *me*?"

"I guarantee that in one month you will begin to feel the effects."

"*Feel the effects!* Be specific, man. In one month's time, will there be any growth?"

"My method is not inexpensive, but rightly so. Yes, Mr. Gissing: though slight, there will definitely be hairs upon your head in one month's time."

"You *promise*? That is, you've done it before?"

"With scalp conditions such as yours, which are uncommon, yes, I can say unequivocally, I have."

"Let's begin immediately."

It was necessary for Mr. Gissing to stand on his head for several hours and then submit to having his dome raked with a strange electrical device rather like a combination cotton gin and sewing machine.

"Be careful," he reminded the doctor every few minutes, "do not on your life disturb that last hair. Don't even go near it."

Upon leaving the Binkley Clinic, Mr. Gissing put a Band-Aid over the hair and returned to his cottage, tired but happy.

"It's all right now," he said with jubilation to his wife. "I've this month's payment. And by next month I am guaranteed a new growth. Isn't that wonderful!"

"Yes, dear. Supper is ready now."

After stowing away his first indigestible meal in some time, Lorenzo turned to his wife and was shocked to observe how wan and

beautiful she looked in the firelight. He felt a surge of sorts.

"Anastasia," he said. "You're looking fit."

"Thank you, Lorenzo."

"Very fit, indeed."

"Thank you, Lorenzo."

"In fact, if I may remark, you're looking positively pretty, somehow."

"You are very gallant."

"Nonsense. See here, you're not angry about what happened as a direct result of poor old Dad's death? I mean my skipping off and all that—"

"Not angry, no."

"Good girl. Good *girl!* It's the way a man's constructed, one supposes. Well, it's all over now. I mean, we were barely getting to know one another."

"Yes . . ."

"Say, pretty sage of the old boy—meaning me—outsmarting the Devil himself, eh, what?"

"Very sage indeed, Lorenzo. I'm tired. Do you mind if I go to bed?"

Lorenzo smiled archly and delivered a pinch to his wife's backside. "Oh," he exclaimed, "I can feel it growing already. The hair, that is. I can make the payment tomorrow—it *is* the first, isn't it?—and by next month I'll be able to start all over again without any fears. Dr. Binkley says *his* hair won't shed. Think of it!"

They retired and, after a certain amount of wrestling and one thing

and another, Mr. Gissing dropped off to a very sound sleep.

"Anastasia! Oh, Lord!"

"Yes, dear, yes, what is it?"

"You mean, *where* is it? It's gone, that's where. *Gone*, you understand?"

"I'm afraid I don't know what you're talking about."

"The hair, you idiot. It fell off. Lost. You must help me look for it."

They looked. Frantically. In the bedroom. In the bed. In the bedclothes. The mattress. The sheets. The pillows. Nothing. No hair.

"Again! We must look again! Carefully this time. Oh, *carefully*."

They covered every inch of the room, on hands and knees.

"Are you sure you had it when you came in?"

"Yes. I checked just before I retired."

"Well, have you looked in all your pockets?"

"Yes. No . . . wait. No. Not there."

"Then where did you lose it?"

Lorenzo gave his wife a withering look and continued his prayerful search. He inspected his clothes minutely. His shoes, his socks, his pajamas, his robe. The adjoining bathroom drain. The combs. Everything, everywhere.

"We must find it. It's getting near midnight!"

"But dear, we've looked all day and all night. Can't you just sort of forget about it?"

"Anastasia, from the way you talk one would think you *wanted* to see me sizzle."

"Lorenzo! What a discourteous and utterly unattractive thing to say!"

"Just keep looking."

At last, exhausted, breathless, hungry, his mind a kaleidoscope of fear, Lorenzo hurled himself onto the bed and lay there trembling.

"Would this be it?"

He leaped to his feet. He took the hair from his wife's hand. "Yes! Yes, it is! I'm sure of it—see, how brown it is. It isn't yours: yours is all black. Oh, Anastasia, we're saved! I'll get it in the mails right away."

He started back from the post office, still shaken by his experience, and was almost to the door. A finger tapped his shoulder.

"Mr. Gissing?"

"Yes, yes?" He turned. It was the man he had encountered by the Thames, so long ago. Still badly dressed.

"Well, what is it? Almost had me, didn't you?"

"Come with me," the man said.

"In a pig's eye I will. The payment, it so happens, is already in. And on time, too. So tootle oo, old boy—"

The man's clothes suddenly burst into flame and in a moment Lorenzo found himself confronted by a creature unlike any in his experience. He quailed somewhat.

"Come with me."

A hand of hot steel clutched Lorenzo's arm and they began to walk down an alley where no alley had ever seemed to be before. It was very dark.

"What," Lorenzo protested, "is the meaning of this, may I inquire? The contract clearly states that as long as I get a hair off to you on the first of every month, everything's in order."

"That is not quite correct," said the creature, exuding the kind of aroma one associates with barbeques. "One of *your* hairs."

"But—but that *was* my hair. I saw it. No one else was in the house. Certainly not in the bedroom. Except my wife—and she's a brunette."

The creature laughed. "It was not yours."

"Then what—Oh, surely not! Anastasia, unfaithful? I can hardly believe it!"

They walked in silence. The creature was smiling.

"My heart is broken," Mr. Gissing wailed. "Another man in *our* bedroom! What sort of a world is this, where such iniquities are permitted to exist? Surely things can be no worse where we are going."

They disappeared into the blackness.

Anastasia Gissing wore Prussian blue at the funeral. She was left to seek solace from her thoughts and a small brown-haired spaniel named Heine. She bore up remarkably well, considering everything. * * *

The Ungrateful

MAN AND HIS MACHINES ARE DOING A GREAT JOB OF CONQUERING NATURE, OF COURSE. DOES ANYONE DOUBT IT?

THE POINT ABOUT all these queer people you can run into from time to time is just that they aren't really certifiable," said Tex Harrigan in answer to a question of mine. "They're sane enough, and no alienist would give them any more than the normal amount of aberrant concepts or actions."

"What's normal?" I asked.

"You tell me. Take Peyton Farquahr," Harrigan went on, his pale gray eyes looking far back into the past. "I suppose he was one of the first of those I put into my File of Queer People. You've never heard of him; I needn't ask if you have. He was a gadget inventor; he had no less than sixty-four patents on household gadgets ranging all the way from his 'Little Gem Potato Peeler' and his 'Peerless Magic Eraser' down to his 'Patented Bed-warmer'."

"He sounds like a handy man to have around a house," I said.

Harrigan laughed long and heartily. "You don't know how ironic that is," he said. "Wait till you hear about him. Like all gadget inventors, he wanted to try his hand at something big, and at last he conceived it—a mechanical house. A house that did everything for you, like a combination maid and housekeeper and valet."

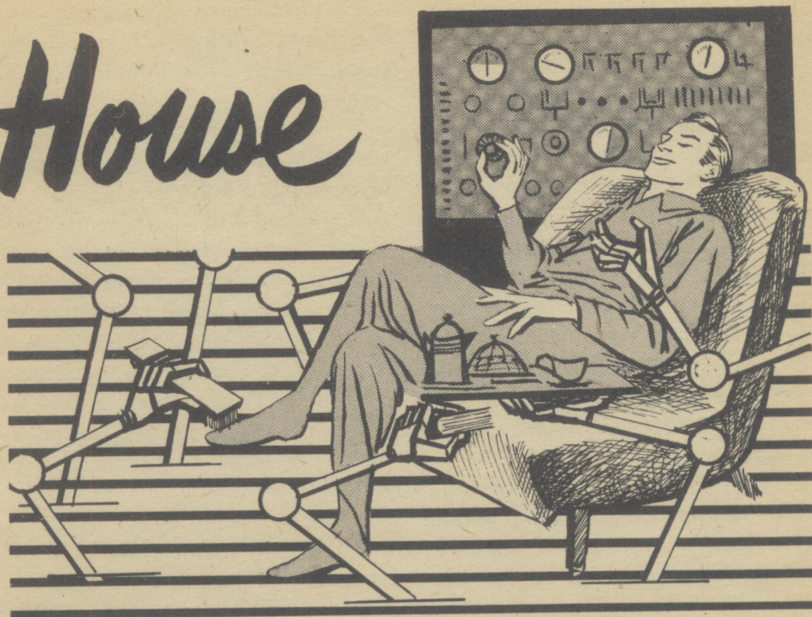
"What a pipe dream!"

"Take it easy. He built it."

"Where?"

"Not far outside Denver. I was on the *Rocky Mountain Gazette* at that time, just beginning my newspaper career. The city editor was a hard-boiled old boy named Davis, Hickman Davis! He called me in one day and gave me a lead. 'Go easy on this boy,' he said. 'We used to go

House



to school together. He's probably nuts, but he's made money on it. He's got a new invention.'

"So I went out to his place.

"Farquahr was a skinny, long-haired fellow with baggy pants and a sports coat, which he appeared never or seldom to change. Not that he was exactly dirty—just careless. I introduced myself and got down to the story.

"Was it true, I wanted to know, that he was building himself a mechanical house?

"He admitted it. But so far, he said, the story was under wraps.

"What will it do?' I wanted to know.

"Everything, Mr. Harrigan, everything,' he said to me. 'Except, of course, those more intimate little chores and duties performed by one's wife.'

"Interesting,' I said. 'But I'm skeptical.'

"It's your business to be,' he agreed.

"I couldn't get another word out of him. What I could see of the house looked very intriguing. It was a low, one-story building, and it looked as if it was being built of chromium or some such similar ma-

by August Derleth

terial. Apart from that, though, it was ordinary enough in the way it was being put up—no fancy angles or curves or anything like that. A lot of glass, true, but big windows were the style then.

"I went back to the office and Davis gave me hell. He gave me a week to get out there again and get a story. So I went back after it next day. Farquahr didn't appear exactly happy to see me. Seems he had something else on his mind.

"'Go away, Mr. Harrigan,' he said.

"'I can't. I've got to get a story. You know Davis.'

"Well, I haggled with him for a while, and he finally consented to give me enough for a story. He took me into the house. The walls were thick—that was the first thing I noticed.

"'Why the thick walls?' I asked him.

"'These walls are filled with all kinds of things that would be beyond you,' he came back. 'Relays, coils, electric eyes, memory tapes, recorders, and so on. You could say, the brains of the house.'

"He didn't offer to show anything to me, and the walls didn't appear to have many openings. He explained that he had promised me only enough for a story, and he took me right out to the kitchen. It was a spotless kitchen, allowing for what needed to be done to it yet. All chromium, glass, steel. He went over to a large clock that was attached to a

unit which seemed to be a stove, sink and disposal all together. He set the clock back to a few minutes before seven.

"'Now all you need to do is watch,' he said. 'I figured someone was coming. I know Davis.'

"I watched. I didn't know what he was aiming at, but since he was watching the stove, I watched it, too. At seven o'clock the stove turned on. It wasn't like an ordinary electric stove, you know, but a complicated affair. There were no grilles on top at all; everything was inside. I could hear some sort of machinery going inside the stove, and the whole thing was working away like mad. In about five minutes one side of the stove slid back and out came an arm—a steel arm, of course—with a tray affixed. On the tray were two fried eggs, six slices of bacon, four slices of toast, and two cups of coffee.

"'Care for breakfast?' he asked me.

"'No thanks,' I said. 'I've had mine.'

"'As you like,' he said.

"He went over to the clock again, set it ahead a little to about seven-thirty, and waited once more. At seven-thirty, the arm slid the tray over to the sink and dumped the plastic dishes; another metal arm came out of the sidewall and scraped the tray while hot water played on it and the dishes. The eggs, toast, bacon and coffee went down a large

drain where, Farquahr explained, the solids were minced up and flushed away. Then the dishes were picked up and racked behind the stove, the water shut off, and the stove closed up. The demonstration was over.

"Everything by clockwork, Mr. Harrigan," said Farquahr.

"He set the clock back once more, pulled out one of the plugs connected to the stove, and put in another one. At seven-thirty the clock gave a single bell-like note and a recording played. 'It's seven-thirty A. M.,' the clock said.

"He disconnected the clock again. 'You see?' he said.

"I saw, all right. It was the damndest thing. I could think of a thousand objections. What if you didn't want to get up at six-thirty or quarter to seven for a change? Of course, you could disconnect the mechanism, sure, but sometimes you don't know that you don't want to get up until just before the time set. What then? Out of bed to shut it off and back in again. And a whole house like that?" Tex paused to ponder, and shuddered.

"Was the whole house like that?" I asked.

"I guess it was. That was what Farquahr was aiming for and what he hinted at when he talked about it. There was another part of it, anyway. When we were going out again I saw a little lever near the door. I gave it a push, and the first thing I knew I was half suspended in the

air, with brushes working on my feet, a whisk broom going over my coat and pants, all on mechanical arms, and another arm reaching up for my hat.

"'You've pushed the switch,' said Farquahr.

"I admitted I had pushed something. He shut it off and we were outside. I tell you I was glad to be out of the house."

"It worked, then?" I put in.

"That part of it I saw certainly did. I said of course I was interested, but I couldn't print everything just the way it happened because people would think I was running off a tall story.

"Just what I thought," he said. But just the same, he opened up a little more. Maybe the thought that I couldn't print everything gave him a feeling of greater freedom. Anyway, he let go with more of his gadgets: a bed that turned down and made itself, windows that opened and closed depending on the degree of humidity and the temperature, a talking calendar which announced dates and anniversaries and so on—oh, a lot of things. What he was working on now was something to make the house absolutely dirtproof, a device or two which would permit the house to eject all the dirt, dust, lint, and what have you. He already had the air purified and now he wanted to keep everything that didn't measure up to standards out of the house. There were one or two

more little things he had to do—like fix up the garage so that the thing opened and closed by clockwork, and put in an electric-eye apparatus that photographed everyone who called, and so on."

"I'd like to see that house," I said.

Harrigan smiled and poured himself another glass of sherry.

"I had my story," he went on. "It was just a matter of what part of the house I was going to write up. I decided to concentrate on Farquahr's self-servicing stove; so I gave the story a brief lead on the mechanization of a modern house of the future, and did the stove up. I don't know whether Davis even looked at my copy; he just okayed it and it went on through.

"The story came out and got people to talking. Not too much, of course; you read so much in the papers that nobody has any time for any one story particularly. But the first thing I knew the advertisers came down on us. The stove, sink, dish, cleaning compound and plumbing fixture boys wanted to know what the hell, what kind of a joke was this, and what was the matter with the *Gazette*?

"The next day old Davis charged into my cubbyhole like a wild bull and demanded to know what I'd been up to, writing a crazy story like that. 'Now debunk it,' he said. 'Wash it off our hands.'

"I can't," I said. "It's true. I saw that stove work myself. Your old pal

Farquahr has done it again,' I said. 'From potato peelers to mechanical houses in sixty-four easy inventions.'

"Said Davis, coldly, 'As far as the *Gazette* is concerned it's impractical if true, and it's just a science-fiction story made up for reader-entertainment, anyway. Go out and get Farquahr to say something.'

"I thought Farquahr had said enough already, but orders are orders. I went out. Farquahr was grinning like a Cheshire cat when he saw me.

"I have to get a statement from you," I said to him.

"The house of the future is the mechanized home. Farquahr's Mechanical House," he said, "is the goal of every householder in the world of tomorrow." He smiled again and added, "That will gall your advertisers and give Hick apoplexy, but that's my statement."

"We've heard from our advertisers," I said.

"So have I. The diehards always fight progress."

"The house looked just the same. When I came he had just been running a demonstration with a hose. He was in the act of spraying water toward the open windows of the house. Just as smooth as a tuned-up motor those windows were rolling down, one by one, and, as soon as he stopped spraying water and the sunshine hit them again, up they all went, one after another.

"Beautiful," he said. "There's the

house every woman dreams about.

"I wasn't so sure about that, but I didn't say anything. I stood and looked at the house and wondered how I could get anything else out of Farquahr.

"No more responsibilities,' he went on. 'No more worrying about this and that.'

"No,' I said. 'Just to keep the plugs in or out and set the clock and watch the current and look out for shorts.'

"You're an iconoclast," he protested.

"No, I'm a reporter,' I said. 'And I've got to say that the Mechanical House is impractical so that our readers won't be shocked into tomorrow overnight.'

"Well, go ahead,' he said, and laughed.

"I went back and wrote the story. The *Gazette* used it, and it appeared to satisfy everyone but a few crackpots who wrote in wanting to know more about it. It shut up the advertisers and Davis forgot about it. But it didn't satisfy me. You see, by this time something of Farquahr's insouciance had got into me. Besides, there was always a chance for a story to go out on the AP or UP wires, and I meant to have it." He stopped to empty his glass.

"Did you get it on the wires finally?" I asked.

He shook his head. "No, as a matter of fact, I didn't." He smiled crookedly. "It looked like a sure

thing, and I could see it as a feature, with photographs and all, as soon as Farquahr relented enough to permit it. But things didn't turn out quite that way. That Mechanical House of his started out as a grandiose ideal and ended up by being too practical."

"Is there such a state?"

"Oh, yes. Farquahr's house achieved it." He chuckled. "Well, I went out there again a week later. Farquahr had read my second story and thought it all right. 'No need to feed the yokels something that's beyond them,' he said. He was still working on his house, of course. He took me in and showed me his 'daily reminder.' It was something like a clock on the wall, only larger. It was fed by a kind of memory tape and was hooked up to a complicated device which measured the day's humidity, temperature, and so on. He gave me a demonstration, explaining that once the thing was adjusted it needed no attention whatsoever; it was even self-lubricating, provided lubrication was there for its use.

"Well, it worked. That fellow had the damndest set of ideas I ever ran into. That 'daily reminder' of his came out with, 'This is June seventeenth. Temperature, seventy-two degrees. Humidity, thirty-one percent. Wind, westerly.'

"What's the practical value?' I asked him.

"If you don't see it, you wouldn't appreciate it,' he answered.

"There was something in what he

said. No need to fuss around with a calendar, turn on the radio for a weather report, or look outside to see which way the wind was blowing. That wasn't all he'd done. He'd made some improvements in the living room. He had it filled with furniture by this time. You could sit down in a patented chair and have your paper or magazine served to you on a rack which automatically adjusted to your sight. You could push a button and the chair would open up on one side and present you with whisky and soda or whatever else you might have arranged for.

"He had continued his work on the problem of keeping the house clean by mechanical means. I couldn't begin to understand the complicated machinery he had rigged up: electric eyes, sensitized plates and wall-strips, and the like. He expected to have the only perfect self-cleaning house in the world. 'Think of eliminating all troublesome housework, the bane of the housewife!' he said. When you think of how many complaints millions of women make about just that aspect of marriage, you could feel that if he could bring it off he'd do more for marriage than any single event in history since Margaret Sanger.

"He already had the plates and wall-strips responding to lint and dust; they simply opened up and a tremendous suction took care of the rest. All the furniture had now been

weighted, and a lot of air was stirred up when the automatic suction began. Now he was at work on preventive measures—something at the front and back doors to keep dirt and dust out of the house.

"Well, I got on to the subject of doing a wire feature story on the house. He was not encouraging.

"'Not until I get all my patents. If then,' he said. 'Besides, once the word gets out I should be ready to go into large-scale production.'

"He expected to do a thriving business. He intended to incorporate and spread his Mechanical House from one coast to another, from border to border; that it would sweep over the face of the civilized world he had never a doubt. Myself, I could think of a good many objections—you know, there was always a nugget of truth in the old superstition that the excessive use of cars tended to weaken the legs of mankind. Think what might happen to the human race after several decades of exposure to Farquahr's Mechanical House, and what might come after! Farquahr himself envisioned the Mechanical Office as the second step. You could go on from there *ad infinitum*.

"So for the moment there was no story. I had to bide my time. I left him that day working happily away at what he apparently thought were the final touches. But, of course, a gadget man couldn't be expected to leave well enough alone, and it was

against the nature of things that his agile brain wouldn't think of something new to add here and there.

"At about that time a big story broke in Boulder, and I took it for the *Gazette*. I was gone for about ten days. When I came back I made a bee-line for Farquahr's Mechanical House.

"By that time the word about the house had got out, and there was a considerable crowd of people standing around—all at a respectable distance from the place. It was the kind of crowd that always gathers about an excavation or a building going up, just for lack of anything else to do. Farquahr was in and out of the house. I contacted him at last coming out.

"'Ah, it's you, Harrigan,' he said with an harassed air. He waved one hand in a sweeping gesture toward the crowd. 'Look. Day after day. It's enough to drive a man crazy.'

"'Yes,' I said, 'any building attracts sightseers, and yours will probably attract a good many more before you're done with it.'

"'I'm almost done,' he said. 'You ought to see my heating unit and my fire-prevention installation.'

"'Let's go,' I said.

"He demonstrated a half-dozen new gadgets, some of them variations of or improvements on earlier inventions of his. The electric eye at the door, for instance, was now arranged so that not only would it flash a picture of any caller on a

screen in every room of the house, but it would also photograph, develop, and stamp each print with the hour of the call. The house had been elaborately protected against fire, with a system of sprinklers and chemicals that went into effect at the slightest hint of trouble. The heating unit was a dream; you could store enough oil for a year and never trouble yourself to look at the furnace for all that time—a far cry from the old days of shoveling coal.

"There were a good many other things, but you get the drift of the set-up. Farquahr was intensely proud of it; all his other inventions now seemed to him of no consequence whatsoever compared to this 'crowning achievement' of his career, as he called it. True, he didn't like the crowds standing around, but he was already beginning to accept them as something of his due; they owed him their adulation, and he owed them the courtesy of demonstrating his undeniable inventive genius. Moreover, at this moment, the house was virtually complete, a perfect thing, the sum total of his inventive ingenuity and the achieved goal of his ideals. He was waiting to test only one thing: the dust and dirt repelling machinery.

"'The feelings of the house,' he explained it. 'I've got the house to functioning just like a sensitive human being,' he said, 'and it will now reject grime and dirt just as readily as you or I might react to it—only

perhaps it's more scientific and impartial about it, being unsentimental.'

"He talked about it as if it were alive.

"'You make it sound sentient,' I said, 'alive and thinking.'

"'To all intent and purpose it does think, doesn't it?' he asked me. 'It operates pretty much like a human being, if you stop to analyze it.'

"'Damned if it didn't, come to think of it! It responded to stimuli in patterns just as predetermined as most of those into which the average human being falls.

"'I'm all set to give it a demonstration now,' he said. 'I've set all the clocks for three, and it's a minute or so to the hour. At three o'clock on the head everything will jog into place and the house will be functioning in every division.'

"He stood there beaming happily, if a little obsessively, at his invention.

"Well, three o'clock came, and everything went like clockwork. The windows went up; the garage door opened up for a non-existent car to roll out, and, after a reasonable while, went down again; the lawn sprinklers went into operation and wherever they were near windows, the windows shut. And so on.

"Right then and there, I decided that the whole thing was too perfect. And I'm damned if Farquahr didn't obligingly demonstrate my own conviction to me. He walked

over to go into the house. I saw the door open and the brushing equipment begin to go into action. Then suddenly there was one tremendous *whoosh*, and out flew Farquahr, just exactly as if he had been booted out at the end of an extraordinarily powerful foot. He flew through the air and landed on his belly, spread-eagled, about ten feet from the door.

"I ran over to him and helped him up. He was dazed.

"'What happened?' I asked. 'Something go wrong?'

"'I hardly think so,' he answered.

"'Some flaw in the mechanism?' I asked.

"'No, the mechanism's perfect.'

"'Try it again,' I said.

"So off he went again, a little less confident this time, and opened the door.

"Once more he was seized by the perfectly-functioning cleaning apparatus, once more he was caught up in a furious blast of air, once more he was catapulted over the stoop to the lawn outside, all to the vast and vociferous amusement of the watching crowd.

"This time he didn't wait to be helped up. He staggered to his feet and, with an angry shout, leaped once more for the house.

"It was just as futile as the first time. He was getting bruised and shaken, but he was game. He tried the back door, and the result was the same.

"The plain fact was that the Me-

chanical House would have none of its inventor. I went around and suggested to Farquahr that he ought to turn off the mechanism so that he could investigate for flaws. But he insisted that there weren't any flaws in the machines, and he couldn't turn off the mechanism without going into the house and he couldn't get in.

"The windows," I suggested.

"But they were out of the question. He had them rigged up for burglars and anyone who sought entrance through them would be imprisoned by an uncomfortable electric charge.

"What's wrong?" I asked.

He just shook his head. He was angry, hurt, bewildered. But underneath all that I could sense that he knew what was the matter. And in a little while, I knew, too. He had said there was nothing wrong with the machines, and he ought to have known. So if there was nothing wrong with the machines and the Mechanical House was functioning as it was intended to, why then the flaw lay in Farquahr.

"And that was it. The Mechanical House was too practical or built on too conservative lines. The plain fact was that Farquahr was just too unclean for the house and the house ejected him like any other piece of lint, dust mote, or stray leaf. Perhaps it was that habit of Farquahr's of running around in old clothes. Perhaps not. Whatever it was, it was certain that just as soon as Farquahr

stepped inside his Mechanical House, the house responded by throwing him out bodily."

I laughed. "That's gratitude!"

"Don't laugh," said Harrigan. "Farquahr's sense of humor didn't extend that far. And what happened after that just took the heart out of him. He finally realized that the only way in which he could get back into the house was to shut off the power from outside. So he applied to the utility company to shut off the power at a certain hour, so that he could disconnect the gadget which rejected him, and the company obligingly did so.

"Unfortunately, just about that time there was a corking electrical storm raging, and lightning struck the house. Farquahr got out there just in time to see the house burn down. Since the whole thing depended for its existence on the power, the sprinklers wouldn't work without electricity. As a matter of fact, Farquahr in his enthusiasm had forgotten auxiliaries in the event of a power shortage. He had just made the mistake of taking something for granted because it had never failed him before."

"But he could build it over," I said.

"Could, but didn't. He went off on a holiday in Canada and vanished. I think the humiliation of being thrown out of his own Mechanical House was too much for him. Rank ingratitude." * * *

The PASSION of

MUSIC TO BRING LIFE AGAIN.

HE WAS THE LAST MAN, AND
ONLY HE COULD MAKE THE

by Bryce Walton

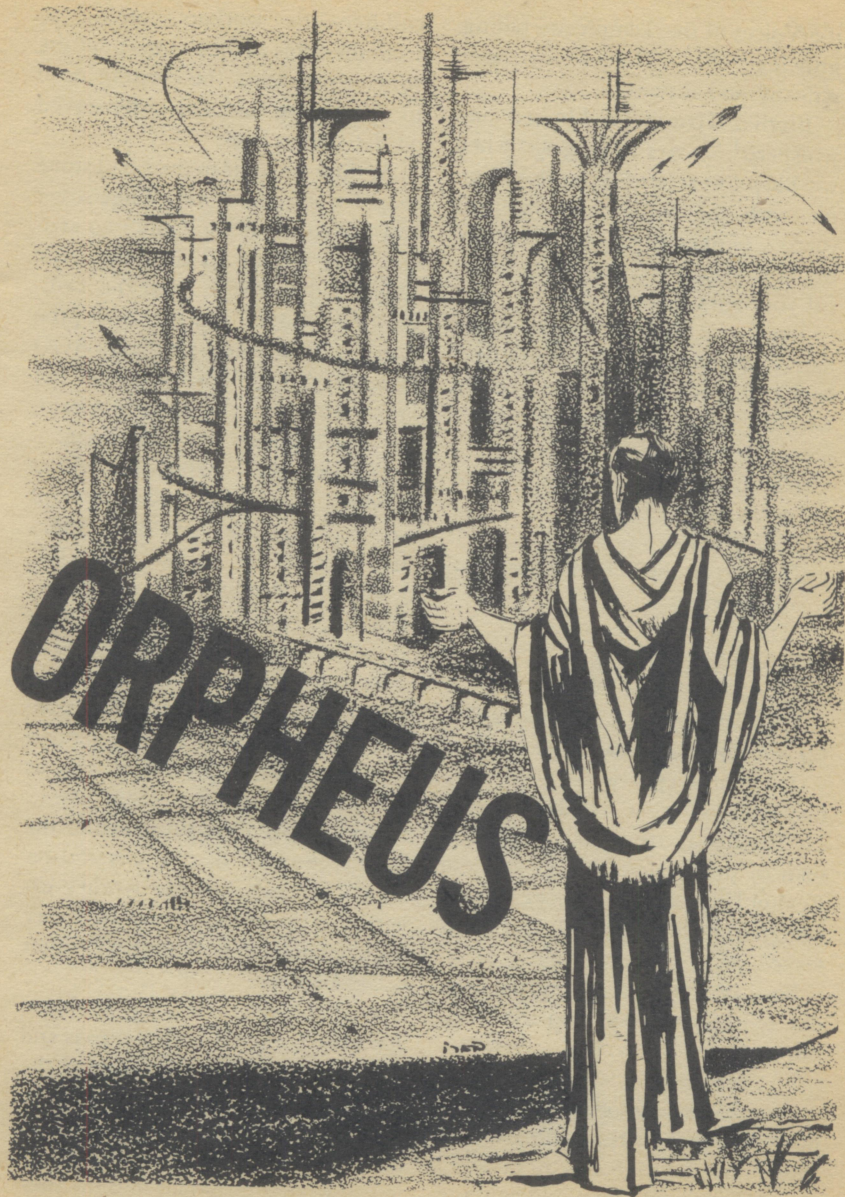
BROTHER HAMMOND pointed to the far horizon. "The City's in that direction, but I can't say how far, my boy. I've forgotten. But a long way. You'll take some cheese and pemmican biscuit, but you'll have to forage along the trail. It'll be dangerous—strange beasts and who knows what kind of men?"

A hawk dropped through the clouds and fell like a black stone

past the high promontory on which Jonathan Scott stood.

Brother Scott said, "I've prayed all day, since you told me I was chosen to carry the Song, that the Divine Ultimate Reality behind appearances would guide me in safety."

"You were chosen, my boy, because you play the Song with greater passion than any of us." Brother Hammond's harsh brown robe flattened in the high wind against his bent, bony frame. He took the ritual cylinder from the cloth bag suspended from his neck. He turned a dial to refresh his mind with the Temple Voice. He was old, and sometimes he forgot the older words. "You hear the words, Jonathan, my boy? Even



the Voices of the Temple are fading, growing old." The words were scratchy and distant.

Brother Hammond blinked and whispered. "It was so long ago when we Elders were sent from the Temple with the Song. Four hundred years—. Longevity is a hard burden, my boy. Maybe you should be grateful you don't have to carry it."

Jonathan's shoulder-length blond hair glittered as he threw his head back to the sun. His eyes were bright with the ecstasy of anticipation. *He would carry the Song!*

The cylinder spoke in a kind of fading whisper:

"The Word is the Song!"

The two on the height repeated it, chanting softly:

"The Word is the Song."

"The Song is the Word."

"The Song is the Word."

"The Song is the Key to salvation, for all hope and realization . . ."

Jonathan's eyes were glassy and hot, and his throat felt dry.

"Sanctus . . . Sanctus . . . Spokesman of the Divine, Revealer of the Reality behind Appearances . . . the Integrating Principle of the Universe . . ."

So they listened and repeated the old, old instructions from the Temple . . .

Jonathan said goodbye to the people who lived in the Valley of the Preservers of the Song. A hundred and thirty in all—men, women and

children—the workers coming in from the fields to their stone huts, the women preparing the evening meal in open stone furnaces to be served on flat stone plates.

At dusk he went to the small stone chapel at the end of the village street and played the Song. Only two articles were left of all the things the Elders had fled with from the Temple: the cylinder, and the small pipe organ with a thirty-two-note AGO pedal keyboard. Jonathan did not know what thirty-two notes meant, nor AGO. But he knew the Song.

Outside the chapel the other Brothers, neophytes, acolytes and workers, stood and sang while Jonathan played the vesper song. His head was angled back, his eyes closed. Sanctus . . . from the Divine Mass in D, as it was called—though what these symbols meant, no one knew any more. The Song had been recorded on the cylinder, and Jonathan had been able to play it as long as he could remember. Sanctus . . . composed from the substance of the Source, the stuff of true physical reality that underlies the world's diversity. Also, it was written by a very ancient hand of the Source, a Brother called Batoven.

And the next morning at dawn, Jonathan went through the pass and down out of the Valley toward the plains and the sea that would take him toward the City. It was in this direction, even if there was no City left now, that he would find the peo-

ple waiting to be delivered by the Song.

It was a long way, but Jonathan's strides were long and sure. His body seemed fired with a strength beyond that of any one man, and he knew he was approaching the City and the Temple, the Key to the Source. He kept on walking and walking, but there was no City. He would find people though — somewhere, people and the Temple. Knowing this, he kept on walking.

He ate fruit from the forests and clean white flesh from the seashells along the shore by the warm-winded sea. At night, he sheltered behind rocks and built small intimate fires and lay dreaming to the stars, gentle warm south winds of promise whispering and calling him to the west.

Sometimes the white clouds drifting with him seemed like full-bodied women beckoning with white angel's arms and calling lips that faded into mist, and he would awake, sweating, wondering why he should be tempted so at this time. Sometimes in the moonlight when the sea foam curled to the white sand, little wisps of fog danced in slow motion round and round like mist-clothed girls, laughing and calling in most gentle voices. They too melted toward the west, leaving a trail for Jonathan of whispered urgencies and hints of choral voices singing his destiny to the Sun.

They are images of the Song, he thought. No one can understand the

Song. It's something one only feels, and so he had to put it into pictures that he could understand.

He saw beasts he'd never seen before. The Valley was a locked land, except to men there who knew the way in and out of the Pass. It had been three hundred years since anyone had left the Valley. And maybe much longer than that since any kind of land-bound creature other than man had been in there.

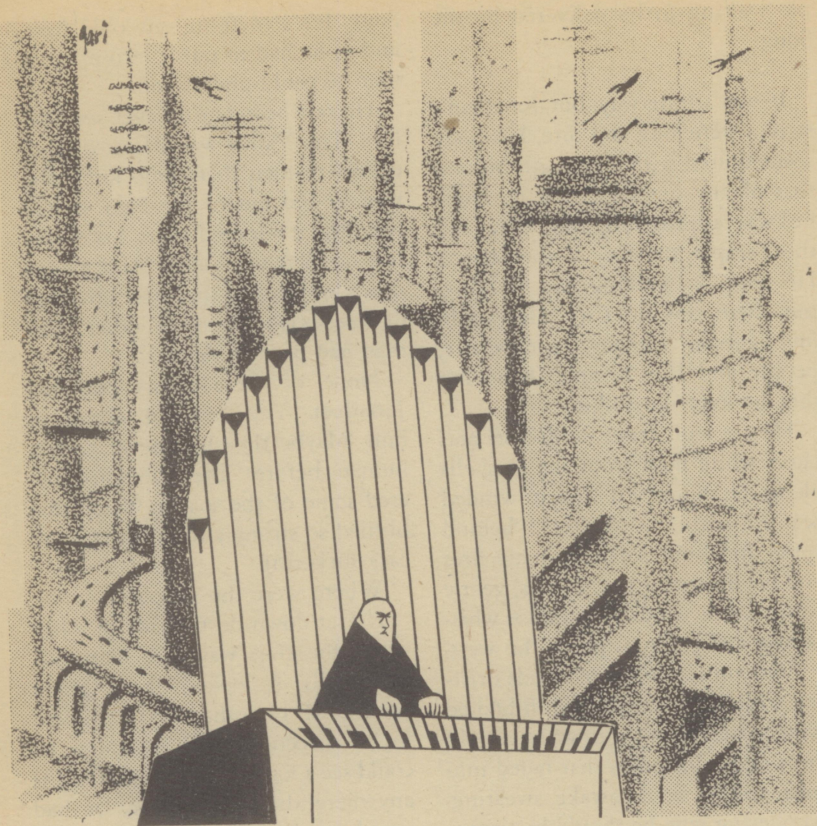
None of these beasts bothered Jonathan. They seemed afraid of him. Maybe they had never seen a human before. The thought lowered some of the soaring flame that burned so strongly in him to an uneasy flickering.

Where were the people?

He sat down on the side of a hill where the grass waved in long rolling swells. It looked like a green ocean with blue shadows. He gazed in all directions and, although he could see a long way, he saw no signs anywhere that there were, or had ever been, human beings.

Digging the staff into the ground, he raised himself and began to walk again. His sandals had worn through and his feet were blistered. He was very tired. His muscles, even his bones, ached.

The Brothers had talked about what might have happened out here after that last Great War. Two things could have come to pass: the end of human life; or a return to some kind of primitive life, barbarism, result-



ing from a terrible lessening of humanity.

The first one didn't hold true. There was still human life in the Valley. But only a few could procreate, and the Elders' longevity was almost ended. To renew the great civilization of the past from that small group in the Valley seemed impossible. They were only there to preserve the Song that would purify

and renew, would inspire whatever people remained to the celestial heights of their true destiny. There would still be a future, for he had the Song and mankind could start afresh, free of the old curses of materialism, as the evil thought was called, and the demons of science that destroyed the values of the Soul.

He walked faster. He went along

the sea and passed the black whispering weeds of the ebb, and he went inland where the oak trees thrust elbows at the wind, and bigger, blacker trees, smouldering with foliage, were dense with singing life.

His pulses rose with the Pacific surge, heavy with summer. Time and land flowed under his determined struggle. Sun and night met him and were friendly and he left them behind, while the east wind ran like glass under the peeping stars, and the south wind ploughed in the shadows of the trees.

And as he reached the further slope of a foothill at the base of high mountains, he found the City.

He stood there a long time, scarcely breathing, his crooked staff pressed sharply into the earth. It was the right City. There had been only one after the first Great War, one City for every one in the Democritan half of the world. One City for the Asians in the other half of the world. That was the way the Brothers had told it to Jonathan, back long ago when he was younger and the Elders remembered things better. Two Cities were all that had been left.

And then the second Great War, though few knew much about that. Anyway, only the Democritan City would be left. If any people still lived, they would live here. So it was said. The Asians could not have survived the second and last Great War.

The Brothers had said that only the democratic side could win the ultimate victory.

Jonathan felt weak in spite of the ecstasy that had flamed up inside of him at the sight of the City. His face felt flushed and hot. He couldn't eat anything.

He sat up there on the hill a long time and watched. There seemed to be no life below him in that vast fifty-square-mile area. Finally, Jonathan stumbled on down the hill, then stopped and sank to his knees. All the weariness of that journey seemed to settle around him. The sun's light on the City had distorted his vision. Now that he was closer he could see he had filled in terrifying vacancies and gaps and holes with his own dreams, his preconceived dreams of what the City would be like.

Actually now he could see that there wasn't much of a City left. A burning sensation of fear was growing in his chest. A kind of dark and terrifying vacancy threatened to open before him, and he seemed to cling to little rays of light like a man about to fall through a glowing net into an abyss.

Bones, he thought. Shiny, brilliantly shiny metal bones, polished and still. Shiny metal joints like giant elbows twisting up from cratered ground, twisted brokenly as far as Jonathan could see, into the narrowing valley that wound back with the river from the sea into the mountains. Across the river a few strands

of glistening cable hung motionless like dried tendons. And here and there, the ragged ends of fused and melted metals protruded from the water and the further shore.

"And the priest will be fire," the Asians were reported to have said. *"And blood the witness."*

Grass grows where the flame flowered. Metal, the burned-out chemicals of the demons' tools, lay in the shattered crucible of the devil science . . .

No life at all, Jonathan whispered, except small furry animals with tails, and the birds.

The landscape seemed to turn like a wheel under Jonathan and the sun dimmed. Sweat was damp and sticky under the coarsely woven cloth of his robe. His heart thundered in his temples and he longed to lie down in the cool grass and sleep—here within sight of the greatest sleep of all.

Peace . . . peace, the heir of dead desire . . .

He lay there feeling the insolent quietness of steel and stone. Above him, the clouds raced northward as the river raced below. Every fiber of his body trembled with faintness. The people he could have saved had all bubbled up in the violence of fire and become ash in evil metal . . .

"Hello. Why do you wear such funny clothes?"

He did not look up at once. He hardly trusted his senses now, but he'd heard no one approach. Yet it

was a real voice, for now he saw a shadow bend softly before him. A young woman's voice, gently sweet but with an undertone of deep feeling and sympathy. It was almost as though her voice reflected his own momentary despair.

"Are you resting? Can you hear me?"

"Yes." He saw her, and he got up quickly. He forgot his weakness as he stared. He saw a nobly formed woman, erect and browned and strong as a new tower of stone. Her features were sculptured into a strong dark face: straight nose with a high bridge, firm wide eyes that gazed down with open and steady curiosity into his.

She was too much like those mist-draped, forbidden women of his dreams. She wore a slightly concealing, brightly-colored cloth around high breasts and flat, almost boyish hips. The thin cloth fluttered in the hushing and creaking of the wind.

An inward pressure grew in his throat and he could not speak for a while, even in a whisper. Then he realized in a tide of emotion what this really meant, to him, to the old, old plan of the Temple.

He grabbed her shoulders. "There are more of you—! I mean more women, men, children—."

"There are many of us around here. Children—?"

He said "children" again, and she shook her head. Maybe they had some other term—.

She put her hands on his arms, ran them softly up toward his shoulders and down again, and smiled. Her teeth shone and her eyes were brighter now as though reflecting his own growing excitement.

"But there doesn't seem to be anyone living there." He pointed at the City.

"No. Maybe no one ever has lived there. Who would want to?"

"Where do you live?"

"I'll show you. You need rest and sleep and food." She took his hand. Her warmth and softness reached out to him in his weakness and his loneliness. The longing that ached in him at the same time made his hands tremble with guilt. Nothing should interfere with a Brother's devotion to the Song and the Temple and the Work.

"I like you," she said lightly. "I could love you. You're very appealing. You're bigger and your hair is brighter and your shoulders broader than any man among us."

His face reddened. No woman among those in the Valley would ever speak to him, to any Brother, this way. Tingling excitement he couldn't control ran up his arm like a chill, and the sound of the ocean was like blood in his ears.

They walked slowly down the sloping hill and moved under the shadows of the mountains in the sunny afternoon. They went through sweet high grass filled with the scents of summer. They stepped among red,

purple and golden blossoms that wavered in the warm winds.

"Who are you?" she asked again.

He tried to tell her, but he stumbled and would have fallen had she not held him up.

"You're too tired and ill now to talk," she said. "You must have walked such a long while. We'll talk about it later. After you've rested. You will rest and sleep a long time and grow strong again."

But he kept on trying to explain. She didn't seem interested, not really. She seemed only to be trying to be interested. But she just didn't understand. Few of the significant words he used were even familiar to her. This he realized as he whispered to her.

She just looked at him and her eyes had nothing in them that he could recognize, except a kind of passionate sympathy which had nothing to do with what he said, but seemed only her attempt to share with him feeling and hope and longing and need.

"I just don't know about these things," she said again. "It only seems to me that you aren't happy. Everyone should be happy. There's nothing else."

His toes dragged a little as he staggered beside her. They went much nearer to the City, past the edge of vast piles of shiny rubble, circling back again toward another sector of the foothills. Birds floated from girder to stone and sang strange

prolonged and varied patterns of song.

The Song, Jonathan thought, as the world blurred and seemed to shift crazily under his feet. Words aren't adequate. The Song is the Key. The Word is the Song. He would find the Temple, which was indestructible. When he played the Song, Syndra and the others who heard it would understand. She had said her name was Syndra. That was an odd name.

He rested and slept, drifting through a timeless land. The people had seemed to be numerous enough, if he remembered correctly, and they lived in caves in the side of the hills under the big granite overhang, deep cool caves with open fires in the front.

Sometimes he awoke slightly in the easeful darkness of the cave and always he heard the bright, starry laughter outside. He couldn't remember hearing anything else out there except that free, abandoned laughter, like birds' voices. And he remembered also the soft, careful whispers when they came into the cave where he lay.

Syndra seemed to stay there beside him all the time. Whenever he awoke slightly, she was there looking at him, her eyes always understanding, always reflecting whatever he felt. Joy, lethargy, half-sleep, dream, those moments of forbidden desires, brief looping instances of

sadness and shame, times of exhilaration—whatever fleeting mood was his, he saw it reflected in her face and eyes, in the posture of her body, in the soft, caressing movements of her hands.

And once, when he had dreamed of something he couldn't remember, and awoke startled by his own fear, that was there too, in her face and eyes. Fear—and he shut his eyes at once.

In daytime there was sun, muted and streaked with dust that gave a cozy, lazy warmth to the cave. And sometimes at night when he awoke for a while, still half dreaming, her body was etched in moonlight, moving a little, sighing gently. And beyond her, through the cave's mouth, he could see the enormous films of moonlight trailing down from the mountain heights. Space, vastness, and the distant shining ocean lay light like a haze. Little vapors gleamed and little darknesses marked wood and valley, but the air was always warm and soft and contenting—and there was always Syndra in the moonlight.

Sometimes at night the wind raved in the dark, and the fire-shadows flapped, and the ocean battered against the rock. And once thunder walked down the canyons over the cave mouths and he saw her still there, sitting, looking into his face and eyes.

They were beautiful people, Jonathan discovered later, when he was

well and strong again. But of course it was all wrong. He walked with Syndra among the caves, up and down the hills above the City. It seemed blasphemous somehow. But he felt a peace, a contentment, he had never felt before. And he knew it was wrong. It was a kind of paganism, and it wasn't right.

There were no machines—that part of it was good—none of the gadgets of the devil, no evil tools of the destructive demons of science. Not even a wheel. These people had intelligence enough and the potentiality to learn. But they had no drive in that direction. They were just happy, thoroughly satisfied, and of this Jonathan approved and was very glad.

He explained to Syndra as best he could why this pleased him, and he kept hoping that she or someone among these people would understand. Science, materialism, had destroyed civilization in that First Great War. It had been misused, it was evil, because people had worshiped it and almost destroyed themselves. After that war, the City State of Democritas had gotten on the right road, away from the worship of materialism. They had put philosophy, religion, psychology, as it was called then, ahead of materialism. Now these words were almost meaningless. But the spirit, the understanding was there, even if he couldn't put it into words. It was all in the Song that put truth and final

understanding into the human heart.

The Democritans had combined science and religion into one governing force. The scientists and priests became one. Religion and philosophy were the motivating forces for science. Science was only a method in the development of the soul, never an end in itself. All this the Brothers knew who had fled from the Temple to preserve the Song. So now Jonathan knew.

The Asians had been on the wrong road. They had not learned. They had been strictly material, coldly scientific, believing in any means to justify the end. They had hated the Democritans and prepared to destroy them for purely cold and, to them, scientific reasons.

So the Democritans had had to stay prepared for a long time to meet the Asian threat. And then the second and last Great War . . .

What had really happened? These people of Syndra's had no idea, seemed to have no cultural memory. Some kind of mass shock, Jonathan thought. They stand still. They're afraid to move back, and afraid to move forward. But I have the Song, and that will show them the way.

He had to find the Temple. There, science and religion had been combined. From the Temple came all directions, guidance, inspiration, from the scientist-priests. Science alone wasn't enough. Religion alone wasn't enough. The Democritans had been

on the right road, and now he, Jonathan Scott, could preserve that road, see it widen out and out into a glorious future . . .

But he had to find the Temple. He asked about the Temple and tried to explain what it meant. No one knew. He was frightened and he didn't know why. He was glad because they had not gone along the suicidal pathway of strict materialism. But they had no religion either. No religion at all. And this made him afraid.

He saw no children anywhere, and this frightened him, too. But no one knew what he was talking about when he tried to ask them about children. They had never seen humans smaller than themselves. Love, sex, these things they understood thoroughly—up to the point of procreation. That they could not comprehend.

Everyone seemed about the same age. He saw no old people. No one was ever sick that he could see. No one was ever dissatisfied, or irritated. No quarrels, no violence or hostility. There were just a round of simple duties to keep the small social units, somewhat like a family, functioning. And the rest of the time was for dancing and laughter and drifting leisure. It was like being on a clear and warm-scented river that had started nowhere and was going nowhere, and whose currents were barely determinable.

No science. No religion. Nothing. No awareness of anything beyond

the visible and immediate. No yesterdays. No tomorrows.

He was glad he wouldn't have to convert them. He had the Song and he would find the Temple and that would be enough. They had no false beliefs from which to be converted. You couldn't educate them because they had no understanding of his words. But the Song could make them know, the Song went directly to the heart.

He started walking, one midafternoon, down the hill toward the City. Syndra ran after him. He knew he had to find the Temple. A kind of lonely, desperate panic came over him as he stopped on a height and looked downward and Syndra's face reflected how he felt. He could be with all these gentle loving people, and still be more alone than if he were actually physically alone, for they seemed always to share what he felt. If he was sad, someone should be happy. If he was suddenly afraid, someone around should show courage.

He walked faster. The Temple seemed suddenly more important than it ever had before. No children. No old people. No science. No religion. No movement forward. No memory backward . . . It was meaningless on the surface, but all the answers were in the Temple.

"But we've never been in that City," said Syndra, running behind him. "Why should anyone go in there? It's ugly. There's not much

fruit to gather. And no animals worth hunting. I can't really believe people lived in there once . . ."

"I've explained," said Jonathan, somewhat exasperated. "That's what happened to those buildings. People lived there, then they had a war, a terrible war. And the buildings were destroyed. It wasn't always this way."

"But if they liked living there why did they destroy it?"

Jonathan sighed. "Total war . . ." How could he explain it? They wouldn't understand mass warfare; they couldn't. Even the faintest hostility between individuals was unknown amongst them.

He turned. He felt embarrassed as she stood up close to him, and he could see the warm, intimate light in her eyes. "Don't go," she said softly. "Stay with us . . . with me."

"I must find the Temple," he said desperately. "Look here . . . you go back. I may be gone a long time . . ."

She shook her head. She seemed in pain, as though torn between some strong desire to do what he asked, and something else—and yet it all seemed only a reflection of how he felt, even the desire for—.

So he guessed that she sensed also how much he really wanted her to stay with him. That also made him afraid. He did not trust his own sense of right and wrong any more.

He turned and started walking rapidly, moving away from the caves, following a narrow, winding pathway toward the valley and the

ruins of the City. She followed him. She did not say anything, now.

There was so much that the Brothers who had been sent to the Valley with the cylinder, the organ and the Song, had not known—or had forgotten. In four hundred years one could forget. And—maybe it had been longer. Sometimes Jonathan wondered if the Brothers really knew now how long they had lived in the Valley.

The uneasy flickering began again in his stomach. There was something frightening about all this, strange and inexplicable, something invisible and everywhere that crowded down around him. He walked faster.

The Temple had the answers. There, he would play the Song. Somewhere was the Temple. It had all the answers.

It was a long time since they had left the hillside and the caves. Jonathan lay on his side, his hands extended upward along the shattered rubble of stone and steel. Behind him, Syndra sat, her head bowed. In the hot sun's glare, they were burned and glazed, thin and soiled. They looked like two figurines fallen from a shattered height, somehow miraculously preserved.

He whispered through cracked lips. "That's—that's the Temple. See . . ."

She looked up slowly and nodded, but there was nothing in her eyes except the same weariness that he

now felt. Beyond that there was no understanding. It seemed as though she was trying hard to react as fully as he did, to fill her heart and face and eyes with the ecstasy that Jonathan felt.

"It's so big, Jonathan. It's . . . like a mountain."

Far beyond the inland part of the City they had found it, high, very high up the side of a mountain, so that it dominated the entire valley clear to the sea. It overlooked the entire fifty square miles of ruins, yet itself was untouched by time or violence.

They had seen it the evening before, shining down through the sun's glare, in a far, high splendor of shifting hues. But Jonathan had not believed it then. A mirage, he had thought, an image created by the longing in his heart.

But now he knew the Temple was real. It had loomed larger as they came close, until now its spires and steeples and columns and glistening domes seemed to tower higher than the eye could reach, stretching up beyond the clouds.

The light reflecting from it sent an incredible renewed strength into Jonathan, lifted him to his knees, then his feet. Above him alabaster steps circled up and up. Half a mile wide at the base, they narrowed in graceful spirals, disappearing somewhere above their heads in a blaze of promising color.

The awful weakness of fatigue

was gone. Now he could not feel anything. His feet seemed to float as he went up the winding steps. There was no world beyond this world of the Temple, and no sounds except the Song that was stirring for release in his brain and in his eager fingers.

Far away it seemed he could hear Syndra calling, calling, but he couldn't be sure. He climbed faster, up and up. Cloud mists raveled round him and the choir music of all his dreams fevered in his brain.

Syndra had not recognized this towering structure as the Temple. No one had told him. But he knew. He knew as a flower knows and opens to the sun.

He reached dizzy, vertiginous height, up steps worn deep by the climbing of many feet for many hundreds of years. They would climb again. He would play the Song. The Song would lead all to the final glory that had long been man's due—freedom to act without the age-old curse of the devil science and its materialistic demons of destruction. There would be no Asians to express an attitude of destruction and mar the bright highway of human progress. There would be no science, with its blinding values, to race too far ahead of philosophy and life.

He seemed to hear Syndra calling from somewhere that seemed very far away.

"Jonathan—. Jonathan!"

He did not look back.

"Jonathan—don't leave me! *I'm afraid!*"

He glanced back as he reached the top step, and saw her. She seemed far away and small. He was beyond feeling what he knew he felt for her. He was larger, a part of something far greater than two people and whatever emotions they might have for each other.

He turned back toward the Temple. He couldn't hear her any more. He couldn't see anything but the divine building, looming up like a mountainside across a vastness of sun-splashed mosaic. Fountains stood lifeless between soaring columns and purple shadows. Rising up before him, the Temple seemed to be a mile wide, perhaps wider, Jonathan thought, for it curved away on both sides into the clouds and a haze of distance.

He looked up. He could not see the top of the Temple because of clouds, but steeples and towers and columns climbed higher and higher. They seemed to glitter and shiver and Jonathan felt he was floating on endless radiance as from millions of shards of multicolored glass. He felt an ecstatic suffocation, a blinding joy as though he somehow was becoming a part of the light, a part of ineffable ecstasy of love and adoration and the eternal Passion of the spheres.

He walked toward the giant doors while the red rays of sunset reflected down from the clouds. The doors

were fifty feet high. They seemed to expand as he approached, his shadow growing small, seeming to diminish slowly in size until he felt like a small stone in the middle of a vast plain. He was like a man caught up in a far world designed for giants.

The dying sun's rays found new life and rebounded from the metal doors. A deeper inner light seemed to come out of the metal. He kept on walking and his mind and body were pulsing with the rhythm of the Song. He went on through the doors that had not opened. No human hand had ever opened those doors, but he was through—like dissolving oneself in glass, walking through water one could inhale like high fresh air.

From so far away he seemed to hear Syndra's voice in a wild and fading cry. "Jonathan . . . where are you?"

And then from even further away he heard what might have been a beating of fists against giant doors.

There was a strange inner tingling in him as he walked down the endless aisle, between the rows of worshipers' seats that curved away and out of sight in both directions. Bars of light streamed down from somewhere so high Jonathan could not find it. But he was aware of the distant arch that rose far above him, fusing and meeting somewhere like the archway of the sky.

So long, so long, he thought, since the thousands had come here to receive the light and the Song. And now he alone—no, not alone. He walked with ghosts, invisible shadows of the thousands upon thousands who had once come here. He walked with the memories of centuries. He stopped and sank slowly to his knees.

The golden, shining pipes of the organ rose up and up forever like giant columns. He thought of that tiny instrument in the Valley and compared it with this, and he began to tremble. It was too big, it was vast, it was inconceivable—. Yet there was no one else to play. He thought, but I'm not worthy . . . not worthy . . .

And yet, the doors had melted for him. That was the sign. And there was no one else. He went up the carpeted walkway, past the dais, past the giant console and shining instrument board, and sat down. He seemed surrounded by pedals and keys and pipes.

He lifted his hands. They hung poised. They seemed like the hands of someone else. Or not like any hands, but dissociated instrument of a will greater than one man, or all men. His hands fell.

His eyes were closed. He forgot where he was, or what he had been. The tides of sound carried him away in a surging flood. Starting from somewhere deep down and spreading upward and outward . . . yet it

seemed as though the music were being called inward through his fingers; it was as if he were drawing the music from afar, from the distant star points of time and space.

Muted and slow at first, the symphonic voice mounted thunderously, and he was floating on the mounting tides, breathing it as the swell rose higher, throbbing in great deep-throated sound. Each separate nerve-cell of his brain flamed, and the stars fell from their place and left their cry in his mind.

He drifted on the upsurging fountains of the wines of sound, and everywhere shiny lights and walls kept slipping and drifting around and faces were smiling in front of him. And he was aware then of other sounds, under the music, a throbbing and grinding, a clicking and clacking and roaring and thundering, a meshing and crackling and shifting of weight.

He could see his hands looming large and white and pale and wet, but they were no longer playing. The music continued, growing, roaring, racing, rising, thundering, rippling. And then he knew.

Jonathan was on his hands and knees, crawling, until he lay there where the colored light came down in pastel patterns that shifted and glowed on the pallor of carpets. His mind reeled with remembered ecstasy . . . no, not remembered, for he had never known. But he knew now, as though he was remembering.

Voices, voices in the brain; faces, eyes . . .

Somehow the magnificent music of clear light had suddenly turned into the forgotten corridors of the past. Burning sensations of fear grew in his chest. A coldness too, the coldness of certainty and infinite wisdom, for now he knew.

The Temple knew everything. And now Jonathan knew everything. All at once, all that the Temple knew, he knew.

His eyes felt hot. The vastness of the place was suddenly chokingly hot. Memory rose in him like a volcano bursting with flame. And centuries, with lightning feet, marched suddenly, thoroughly and completely through his brain. No—not HIS memory. The Temple's memory . . . the Temple's memory. It had known everything, and it had never forgotten.

And now he was part of the Temple, so it was as though he too remembered. He had had a curious inner vision of the mind, and the intoxication of swooping motion through space and time, a kind of ultimate freedom. But that was only briefly; now it was gone, and he was part of the Temple.

He knew how it was. At first you need only know the Song, the complex but meaningful notes and rhythm and sequence of the Song. It was a Key. It made you one with the Temple, you were in harmony with it, the doors dissolved for you,

and when the organ sounded, the machinery started.

He screamed—once.

Machinery . . .

He got to his feet and ran wildly up the endless aisle toward the doors. He had started the Organ and he knew he could not stop it. It would continue forever now. To stop it required another Song—a Song he had never learned.

Maybe it had gotten lost somewhere in time or in the brains of dead men. But the other Song was gone. And the Temple itself didn't know it—for the Temple had not been built to stop itself from functioning. It could repair itself, keep itself going forever, now that the harmonies of sound were established. But it could never stop itself.

He had known only the Song, and now he knew everything the Temple knew—but that wasn't enough.

He went through the doors that dissolved for him like liquescent glass. He ran after Syndra across the plains of mosaic no longer splashed with sunlight, but with lights that seemed more powerful in the night than ever the sun had been by day.

The entire valley blazed with whiteness as though caught in the eternal glare of celestial flame. The fountains murmured and frothed with life. The vines were turning green on the walls.

"Syndra! Syndra!"

She did not turn. She did not say anything, and then she disappeared

far ahead of him, down the winding steps that led into the City.

He ran on to the edge of that tremendous height and looked down. He fell forward. He put his hands up and felt his tears squeezing through his tightly-locked fingers.

"Syndra . . . Syndra . . . I can't stop it. I can't put things back again. It's all too big. Syndra . . ."

But then he knew that the shape, the shadow, fading, diminishing down the alabaster steps, was not Syndra. Not any more. It was something else, something that reacted as part of the workings of the Temple. And now it would always be that way, forever and ever . . .

He got up and looked down. He watched the valley begin to move. Everything had been channeled in and out of the Temple. It was more than a place of communion with the Divine Reality behind appearances. It was also a machine of incalculable complexity.

And the vespers Songs of the Organ had kept it functioning until that last terrible day when the Asian bombs had come. But the Temple had been ready for that too. It was a synthesis of all knowledge, and it had been conditioned to handle any and all emergencies. It had the power to protect itself. And it had had enough power, while protecting itself, to destroy the Asians: their ships, their City and every last quivering cell of life they possessed.

It was all so logical, Jonathan thought, as he stood there and watched the valley below throbbing and pulsing and beginning to assume a strange and meaningless pretense of living. Science and religion and philosophy, all thought, combined in the minds of men, channeled outward from one center of final control. Science, religion, philosophy, psychology—all fused. And the scientist-priests who knew the Song were thereby one with the Temple, part of the harmony of its complex structure.

The scientist-priests who had remained here to work with the Temple until the end had sent a few of their numbers away, to preserve the key that would set the Temple to acting again, when the enemy had been destroyed. The Temple had always been alive, only waiting, waiting for someone to activate the sensitive relays . . .

All around him, Jonathan felt the massive murmuring. Below, under the sun-bright glare of giant floodlights, he could see the valley beginning to grow.

Science, like religion, had always been based on faith—faith in the truth of the mind's logical processes; faith in the ultimate ability to explain the world; faith that the laws of thought would someday become the laws of things. But science came to realize that the scientific picture of the world was only partial—a product of the scientists's special

ability in mathematics. They also realized the need for aesthetic and moral values and religious motives, and intuitions of experience.

Science and religion found their goals to be the same. They no longer took separate paths. Everything fused. The Temple, the final synthesis of all FAITH.

Jonathan knew all this. He knew all the Temple knew. He knew a lot more than he even cared to think about now. He stood there, unable to move, a paralysis crowding down around him, and watched the valley, directed by the reactivated intricacies of the Temple, pretend to come alive.

Under the great lights, he saw the giant, sleek machines dart out of suddenly-revealed openings in the hills. Giant streamlined cranes, tractors, loading cars, streamed in and down from all directions, everything working according to preconceived plans, electronically intelligent, operating out of the complexity of ten million binary digits of directive brain.

With fantastic speed, the thing grew. The metal frames began to go up, sprays of plastic and metal and steel spun through the air like monstrous cobweb skeins of silver. As though sentient with life of its own, a bridge began projecting itself across the river. Rockets shot skyward and rockets came down. Monorails began growing up and up, looping and curving, and then small sil-

ver dots began speeding like specks of quicksilver along the lines of metal.

Tubeways, skyways, tiers upon tiers, sprang outward in all directions, making first a mad meaningless maze that suddenly joined to form a perfect pattern—one that kept growing, gaining speed, expanding outward, shooting higher.

He could see the streams of tiny human figures moving in even, darting lines, like ants to and from a mound. The figures streamed out of the caves, down from the hills, moving in orderly, swift rivers that merged and became one with the lines and curves and loops of the City.

A giant explosion of constructions streamed red fire. Metallic dust sifted across the light-splashed mosaic and settled on Jonathan's robe, on his face, and coated his hair with fine silver spray. He saw the bigger machines streaming out. The smaller machines had been busy building bigger machines. The bigger machines were expanding the City, tearing and chewing at the hills, blasting down the faces of the mountains.

They would build bigger machines. The bigger machines would build bigger machines. There was no way to control it, Jonathan knew. No one knew the Song that could control anything. He had known only the Song that began, that began everything . . . everything, everything all over again.

Except now it wasn't quite the same. Maybe that part was wrong. That part about the workers. Maybe that part of the Temple's knowledge was wrong, distorted perhaps. He couldn't believe it.

He ran down the steps. He got lost. He found himself caught up in the swirling, growing, grinding pattern. But somehow he kept moving, sometimes up to dizzy heights in tiny, darting, bright capsules, sometimes hurtling along subterranean tubeways.

He looked at every worker he saw. Some of them he partly recognized, but of course they weren't the same. They walked, ran, worked, with a terrible intentness.

The Temple was right. They weren't the same. Maybe not. But if he could find Syndra, talk to her, then he would know for certain.

He found her sitting in front of a machine. Around her were walls of dials, knobs, meters, needles, voltage amplifiers, and pulsing power tubes.

He touched her shoulder. "Syndra," he whispered. It wasn't loud enough. The whisper was drowned by the murmuring, whirring and humming of the valley and the City growing.

"Syndra," he said, louder this time, bending down.

She looked up. Hot pain seared his throat. There was nothing in her eyes now but a glazed and glassy efficiency, like the luster of the metal knobs and dials and amplifiers.

He backed away. He did not call her name again. She would have a number, and he didn't know what it was. And anyway, it wouldn't matter now. Robotics of some kind—he hadn't been able to understand that completely from the Temple. Perhaps he had forgotten because it wasn't quite worth remembering, something no one would care to remember. Whatever their labels were, they were merely imitations of life.

But they had seemed so human, all of them, he thought. And that too had a reason, everything had a reason. They all had certain tasks to do in the rebuilding, in the functioning of the City in peace and war. They were made to serve, to reflect the needs of men.

But there were no more men here. Only the reactivated commands of men long dead. No men to control the key harmonies of sound.

Now Syndra's people only helped rebuild. No power of the Asians had been able to destroy them. Perhaps they were, like the Temple, indestructible. And they had been constructed to live on, even when the Temple stopped, or to lie quiescent on some dim, low stage of activity, appearing like human beings—so much so no one would ever know they were not humans at all.

That too had had a reason, Jonathan knew. To fool the Asians, to disguise the efficacy of the Asian's destructive force, to divert, to have certain psychological effects — it

didn't matter now. There were no more Asians. The Temple knew that. No more Asians. No more Democritans. *At least, not here.*

Jonathan managed to escape from the rapidly expanding complexity of the City. He went back up over the hills and down again to the sea, and started on the long road back to the Valley of the Preservers of the Song.

He remembered the laughter of Syndra and the others in the caves, the sunny days and the long dreamy nights. He remembered her face and her eyes, and how human, how real they had been to him. He remembered the compassion, the sympathy, the depths of understanding. But then, they had been made for empathy. Perfect empathy.

Behind him receded the glaring sun-lights of the valley and the growing City. He looked back and saw the entire horizon glowing, a thin, twinkling white line, as if a new and frightful white-hot sun were coming up for a new and incredible dawn.

And then he walked on through the moonlight until the line thinned and finally went out altogether.

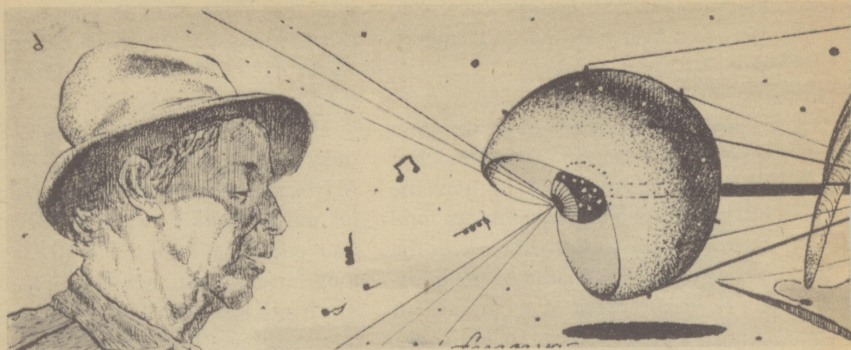
If I had never played the Song to the City, he wondered. Would Syndra and the rest somehow have become human after all? How human had they been, really? That strange and haunting light he had seen in Syndra's eyes, it had seemed so real, so precious—. He shook off the

thought, and with it the terrible sickness that threatened to engulf him, the sickness of the machines, of a world filled only with machines in a macabre imitation of life.

He walked faster through the moonlight, back along the sands. Maybe there was a way. He would—he must—make a way! He would find out! The Elders had lived too long, had grown senile, forgotten much and lost the ability to interpret and translate. But on that cylinder they had preserved so long there could very well be the answer. The other Song, some way to stop what he had started. He had to stop it. It would never stop unless he stopped it. The buildings would expand in all directions, keep climbing higher and higher, moving over the world like some looping metallic plague.

And if it was not on the cylinder then it was there in someone's soul. Of the few who remained in the Valley, the few human beings who remained in the world, someone must know—some old man, some child, some woman. Somewhere among them there must remain a spark of memory, of soul. If he could find it, nourish it—his heart leaped with hope. He was still human, after all. And somewhere he would find a fellow-soul to help him start a new human race.

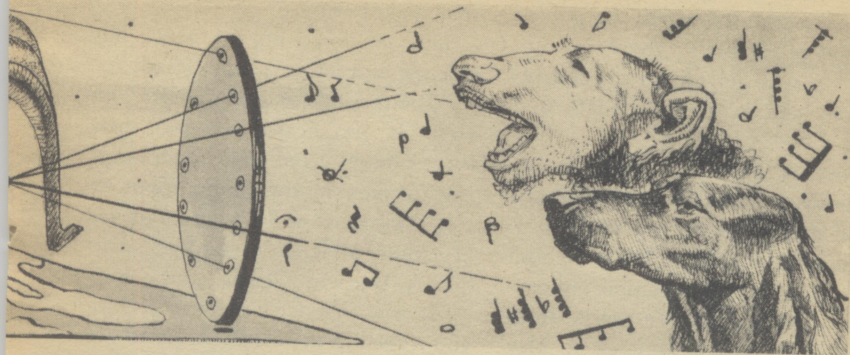
He walked faster. There were a few left in the Valley, and they would find a way to stop the rising, mounting tumult of the Song. * * *



The DOG That

IF YOU WERE FACED BY THE CHOICE OF
SPENDING THE REST OF YOUR DAYS LISTENING
TO A SINGING DOG, OR RISKING THE
CONQUEST OF HUMANITY BY A STRANGE WORLD
OUTSIDE OUR WORLD, WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

by Roger Dee



Liked CARMEN

IT WAS about eight-thirty in the evening, just getting good and dark for June, when Doc MacGuinness came rushing down to my shack at the foot of the mountain.

I was sitting out front on a bench with my pipe, smoking and listening to the whippoorwills calling each other out on the pine slopes and broom-sedge flats. A big white moon was rising in a sky full of stars that burned as bright and clear as Christmas-tree bangles, and the summer air was soft as silk and sweet with the smell of sassafras and honeysuckle. The only off-key note in the night came from Doc's cabin up the

mountain, where Claude was playing an opera named *Carmen* on Doc's phonograph and howling his head off.

Carmen was Claude's favorite, but he wasn't making much headway with it; he still sounded pretty sour on the high notes.

I had expected Doc to be surprised. When he came back from visiting his sister in Washington and found out about Claude and the others, he was bound to be taken aback, so to speak, but I didn't figure he'd take it as hard as he did. Maybe Doc was still edgy from the nervous breakdown that had brought him

down this way originally—he used to be an electronics expert in guided missiles research with the Army, until the strain got too rough and his doctors sent him here to fish and recuperate.

Doc had liked it so well that he never went back. He and I had got to be great friends, and saw eye to eye about most things. We were both what Doc called congenital philosophers, for instance. We agreed from the first evening I went up to play checkers and drink his bourbon that the world was cockeyed and that nobody but us knew what was wrong with it.

But Doc wasn't in a philosophical mood when he reached my shack that evening. To tell the truth, he was fit to be tied.

"Either I have just suffered a thundering relapse," Doc panted, "or I have come home to find myself the owner of a talking dog. Charlie, you looked after my place during the week I was away. *What the hell has been going on up there?*"

Up at the cabin the opera reached the place where a bullfighter named Escamillo stops the show to make his brag. Claude was always partial to that song—aria, Doc called it—and showed it now by getting louder and farther off key.

"A *singing* dog," I said, getting the record straight. "You can't rightly call him a talking dog unless he speaks English, can you? And Claude has been jabbering away for four

days in a row without saying a word that makes sense."

Doc sat down on the bench beside me and let go a long breath.

"Thank God for small favors," he said. "If you heard him too then there's either a red Irish setter singing *Carmen* in my living room or else the two of us are victims of the first joint hallucination in psychiatric history. But why, Charlie, and how?"

"It was that trick electric gadget you rigged in the cellar corner to get rid of ground-squirrels," I told him. "You see?"

"No, I don't see," Doc said—violently.

"Why, those others. They come from—well, you know. You ought to know where that vanishing-varmint trap sends things to, since you invented it."

Doc said a couple of words you wouldn't expect from a scientific man.

"But I *don't* know," he said. "That gadget is based on a sort of dimensional field-warp effect I stumbled across while I was doing research for the Army. I never had time to work it out fully because it had no military application. All I learned about it is that any solid object placed in its field disappears and never comes back. I was too—"

"I know," I said. "You were too busy to walk up to Compton for cement to plug that hole in the cellar corner, so you rigged up that vanisher instead. But it's more than a

varmint trap, Doc. It's a sort of tunnel."

"Tunnel?" Doc said, blinking. "How do you know that?"

"Because a squirrel got into the kitchen while I was up there last week," I said, "and Claude chased it down to the cellar and through the trap. The squirrel didn't come back. Claude did."

"He came back *talking*?"

"Like a Portuguese parrot, only he was talking a language he must have picked up at the other end of the tunnel. I couldn't understand a word of it. He tagged after me and jabbered his head off for four days, but finally he gave it up and went back through the trap. That's how I know about the tunnel, because I tried to stop him and fell through after him."

Doc made a strangled sort of sound. "Charlie Gloster," he said, "yours and mine are two great minds in beautiful accord, and I'd be sorry to break that rapport by committing murder. Will you explain, slowly, just what the hell you're talking about?"

"I'm trying to tell you," I said, "that there's a world of—well, dog-people, I guess you'd call them, though they're a lot smarter than dogs or people either—at the other end of that tunnel. They nailed Claude the first time he went through, and after giving him the works they seemed to take a great fancy to him. Or maybe it was just

that they liked the *Carmen* tunes they found inside his skull when they examined him, and wanted more. Anyway they treated him like a prince and raised his IQ. They're as crazy about opera as Claude is."

Doc sat very still for a minute. Then he said, "Go ahead and tell it in your own way, Charlie. I won't interrupt again."

"Good enough," I said. "But I don't talk so well with a dry throat, Doc. Wait'll I get my jug."

Doc took a bottle of bourbon out of his coat pocket. "Never mind that iniquitous jug, Charlie. Just bring glasses, will you?"

He had calmed down a lot by the time I got back.

"You'd take your own sweet time at Armageddon," he said. "But then why shouldn't you? Deliberation is the philosopher's mark, Charlie, and you're the only real one I ever met. In print or out."

I used to think Doc was ribbing me with his talk about philosophy until I understood that what he quoted from books was the same stuff, in different words, that I'd had to puzzle out for myself. Doc was a great scientist and I was only a half-hermit hillbilly with a game leg and a little pension from World War II, but the difference in background didn't mean a thing between us because we saw eye to eye on the really important things.

Neither of us liked trouble, for

instance, and we had learned by different routes that the only way to avoid it is to avoid people. Theoretically a man should be able to do anything he likes as long as it's legal, but it never works out that way. A man's neighbors keep him toeing the mark of convention closer than any sort of Gestapo could. That's because society can't afford any little deviations; the little ones lead to bigger ones that might crack the whole system. Maybe you like music, say, and you like pink, and there's no harm in either—but just try walking down the streets of your home town wearing a pink overcoat and playing a harmonica, and see what happens!

We agreed that people would get along better if they stuck strictly to their own selfish interests instead of trying to follow an impractical Golden Rule, and that patriotism and nationalism are the same thing under different circumstances. And all the billions of people who thought differently didn't shake our convictions for a minute, because it's a known fact that public opinion is always at least one generation behind the times. Nobody but Columbus thought the world was round, once.

So we had confidence enough in ourselves to feel that we could handle most any sort of problem without calling in help. And a good thing for the rest of the world that we did, because, when the crisis came, if word had leaked out about

Claude's other-side friends there'd have been a panic that would have made the Orson Welles scare look pale.

It took us some time to reach that crisis, though, because first I had to explain the situation to Doc.

"I can't describe this dog-world at the other end of the tunnel," I said. "Partly because I didn't get past the vestibule to it and partly because there's nothing on this side to compare it with. All I really saw was a sort of in-between ground full of queer-looking machinery, a biggish egg-shaped place where everything seemed to be turned inside out. It's easier just to tell what happened.

"When I fell through the trap after Claude these other-siders crowded around us the minute we landed, woofing and yowling at Claude for bringing along a visitor. They were pretty cool toward me, but I couldn't rightly blame them for that because I wasn't dressed to go visiting. As a matter of fact I wasn't dressed at all, and I never felt so unnecessary in my life. I found out that nothing artificial will go through that tunnel, Doc. It'll disappear, but it won't go *through*.

"The other-siders ganged around and buzzed a lot of queer gadgets at me, but they didn't make any mental changes in me like they made in Claude. Judging from the sound of their talk, they didn't think much of the raw material they had to work with. But then I doubt if they'd have

been interested in Claude either if they hadn't found that bullfighter opera in his head; they'd liked that so well that they'd sent him back for more.

"They found out from my visit that nothing that wasn't alive could be taken through the tunnel, and so had to give up their idea of lugging your phonographs and records down to their world. So they've been coming up to your cabin in shifts ever since, singing opera in your living room until I had to sneak away down here to get some peace and quiet.

"I hated to let you walk into a set-up like that without any warning, Doc," I added, "but since you built the gadget in the first place, I didn't think you'd take it so hard."

Doc shook his head like a diver coming up for air.

"If anyone else told me a story like that," he said, "I'd recommend him to a good psychiatrist. But I saw Claude myself, blast his impudent soul, swishing his tail on my living-room rug and howling the *Sequidilla*!"

Up at Doc's cabin the phonograph went quiet for a minute. When it started again I knew that Claude's other-side friends had come up for their evening concert. I couldn't recall the name of the new opera they had put on, but it was one of their favorites.

"You haven't heard anything yet," I told Doc. "There's one spot in this

where five or six of them sing together in different—"

"*Lucia di Lammermoor*," Doc said, shuddering. "The *Sextette*. This I've got to see, Charlie!"

So we got off the bench and went up the mountain together to Doc's cabin, where we found Claude and his friends sitting in a half-circle around the phonograph, singing loud and earnest. There were five of the other-siders this time, and they didn't sound any better than Claude did.

They were all pretty much alike, but they didn't really look like dogs when you saw them close up. They were more woolly than hairy, for instance, except their stomachs, which were smooth and pink and as bare as a bald head. They had fingers and toes like people, which explained how they worked the phonograph. They had a sort of sober and dignified look, too, but you'd have to see them to appreciate that.

Doc and I stood in the doorway for a while and listened. Their howling didn't bother me particularly because I don't know one end of an opera from the other, but I could see from the look on poor Doc's face that he was suffering.

The other-siders saw us right away, but none of them did anything about it until they had finished singing and stopped the phonograph to change records. Then one of them pointed a four-fingered paw at us and said something to Claude that sounded like a question.

"Yash?" he said.

Claude just shrugged his tail and said, "*Yash, gadeesh*," and after that they ignored us and piled more records on the turntable.

Doc craned his neck at the album and groaned when he saw the title. "Let's get out of here, Charlie. They're putting on the *Barber*, and I couldn't live through Claude's *Figaro*!"

So we went around by way of the veranda to the kitchen, where Doc dug up another bottle of bourbon. He was rummaging around for glasses when the possibilities of the situation first struck him.

"This could be a dangerous business, Charlie," he said. "Those creatures seem amiable enough just now, but suppose they take it into their heads to see the rest of our world? Suppose they like what they see well enough to try invading us?"

"I thought of that," I said. "But—"

"That gadget in the cellar!" Doc interrupted. "Charlie!"

He didn't wait to finish. Instead he yanked open the door to the cellar and went clattering downstairs. I followed, and found him staring palely at the empty cellar corner.

"The trap's gone!" he said.

"I was going to tell you about that," I said. "I unplugged it and lugged it upstairs after the others' first visit, but that didn't stop them from coming back. Remember that queer machinery I told you about seeing in their egg-shaped in-

between vestibule? They put it there to keep the tunnel open."

Doc opened the bourbon automatically, but was so upset that he forgot to sample it. He didn't even notice when I took it.

"But if they're as keen as that, Charlie, then they can take this country away from us quicker than we took it from the Indians! They can conquer the world!"

"We don't know that they'd want it, in the shape it's in," I said. "You're thinking like a politician now instead of a philosopher, Doc. There's a good chance that they're not interested in anything but—"

Doc cut me off short. "It's one thing to criticize the world for its stupidities, Charlie, but an altogether different one to stand by and see it overrun. We can't take that chance!"

He squared his shoulders and marched up to the tunnel mouth. "We've got to stop this thing, Charlie. We're going down there and wreck that machinery you spoke of."

There wasn't time to remind him that if we did that we'd be left stranded on the other side. Doc had stepped into the tunnel and was gone before I could stop him. So of course there wasn't anything I could do but follow him, because in his present mood there was no telling what might happen to him. I did have sense enough, though, to park the bourbon on a cellar shelf before I went down. It wouldn't have gone through.

When I popped out into the egg-shaped place I found Doc running in circles like a country cat tossed out into city traffic. There's an old saying that a man without his pants is only half a man, and it held true with Doc. I never saw a man so confused in my life. Not that I was any better shape, because both of us were as naked as jays.

The place we were in wasn't really egg-shaped; it was just that no matter which way you looked everything seemed to rush away and come back in a sort of wavery curve that made your eyes blink and cross. The machinery I had told Doc about was there, but Doc couldn't get to it even after he had pulled himself together. I can't explain that, either. The stuff was there in front of us, but every time Doc made a pass at it he found himself walking backward like a drunk trying to climb a flight of stairs that wasn't there.

All that saved his sanity, I think, was that Claude and his friends came home just then. They popped through the tunnel and surrounded us, yapping and whuffing, and herded us out of the egg-shaped vestibule into another place that was even worse.

It was as big as space itself, without any end but curved up tight in a way that made us feel as if we were locked up in a broom-closet. Everything was sort of turned inside out, and our sense of balance reversed itself every time we turned our heads

so that just standing still was like being in an elevator that shot up and down without stopping. It simply wasn't the sort of world that men could understand; there wasn't any sky or sun or stars or buildings or streets. They didn't even have any weather.

I think we'd have blacked out completely if we hadn't found that we could steady things down by shutting our eyes. We had them screwed tight shut when one of the other-siders clapped some sort of thought-transference gadgets on our heads, and after that we could dicker with them.

The conference that we had with them backed up what I had been trying to get across to Doc from the beginning. I felt sorry for poor Doc—he'd been willing and ready to sacrifice his life for his world by marooning himself on the alien end of this super-dimensional tunnel, when all the time he had only been doing what he called tilting at a windmill.

The other-siders didn't want any part of our world. They didn't like it any better than we liked theirs, and were just as uncomfortable here as we were there. All they wanted was more opera, and if we'd get it to them they promised to close up the tunnel and never bother us again.

Doc was dubious at first. "It sounds good," he said, "but suppose they take it into their heads later on to reopen the trap and invade us after all? What's to stop them?"

"Nothing at all," I told him. "But you're still thinking like a politician, Doc, and not like a philosopher. You and I agreed long ago that our society is hopeless and is getting cockeyed every day, so what difference does it make if these other-siders *do* come up and take over? Probably they'd do a better job of running the world than we did. They couldn't do worse."

Doc thought it over, and finally he agreed.

"That's really putting your philosophy to the acid test," he said. "But we'll try it. There's nothing else we can do."

But a little later, after we had closed our deal with Claude and his other-side friends, Doc suddenly groaned out loud.

"We forgot something, Charlie," he said. "We've promised these people scores of all the opera ever written, but how are we going to deliver it? If nothing insentient can pass through the tunnel—"

"I was going to mention that, too," I said. "But you were too busy charging at windmills to listen. Remember I told you once that I learned how to tattoo people while I was in the Army? These other-siders don't have any hair at all underneath, and I figure I can tattoo a hell of a lot of opera music and words on that much bare hide."

Doc laughed for the first time since he came home and found Claude singing *Carmen*.

"Charlie," he said, "by God, you're a genius! We'll do it."

And we did.

Maybe I should have said we *are* doing it, because we're still hard at work keeping our promise.

A fresh bunch of other-siders comes up every night to have opera scores tattooed on their stomachs, and they're not a bad sort at all now that we're on a business basis. Doc and I get along with them first rate.

The only rub, from Doc's point of view, is that there's a lot more opera in the world than even he realized. By the time he got copies of it all mailed to us, the cabin looked like a music store.

Doc, being a scientific man, figured out after our first night's work just how long it will take us to get all that opera tattooed away, and the answer staggered him. It would bother me too, only I've got nothing to do with my time but fish and play checkers and draw my pension. This is just as relaxing, and as good a way as any to spend the last years of a man's life. In a way, you can figure we're doing a great service to humanity at the same time, so you can't say our philosophical notions turned out to be impractical, either.

I like tattooing fine and I'm learning to like opera. The way I figure it we've got nothing to lose but our time, and what's ten years more or less to a couple of half-hermit philosophers like me and Doc? * * *

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type="checkbox"/> Letter-writing Improvement</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Personnel and Labor Relations</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Advertising</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Retail Business Management</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Managing Small Business</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Ocean Navigation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Sales Management</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Short Story Writing</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Creative Salesmanship</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Traffic Management</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> CHEMISTRY</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Chemical Engineering</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Chemistry</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Analytical Chemistry</p> | <p><input type="checkbox"/> Petroleum—Nat'l Gas</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Pulp and Paper Making</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Plastics</p> <p>CIVIL, STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Civil Engineering</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Structural Engineering</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Surveying and Mapping</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Structural Drafting</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Highway Engineering</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reading Blueprints</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Construction Engineering</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Sanitary Engineering</p> <p>DRAFTING</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Aircraft Drafting</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Architectural Drafting</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Drafting</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Drafting</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Structural Drafting</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Sheet Metal Drafting</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Ship Drafting</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Mine Surveying and Drafting</p> <p>ELECTRICAL</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Engineering</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Electrician</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Maintenance</p> | <p><input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Drafting</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Electric Power and Light</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Lineman</p> <p>HIGH SCHOOL</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> High School Subjects</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Commercial</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Good English</p> <p>MECHANICAL AND SHOP</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Engineering</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Engineering</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Supervision</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Foremanship</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Drafting</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Machine Shop Practice</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Tool Design</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Instrumentation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Machine Shop Inspection</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reading Blueprints</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Toolmaking</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Gas—Electric Welding</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Heat Treatment—Metallurgy</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Sheet Metal Work</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Sheet Metal Pattern Drafting</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Refrigeration</p> | <p>POWER</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Combustion Engineering</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Diesel—Electric</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Electric Light and Power</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Stationary Steam Engineering</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Stationary Fireman</p> <p>RADIO, TELEVISION COMMUNICATIONS</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Practical Radio—TV Eng'ing</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Radio Operating</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Radio and TV Servicing</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Television—Technician</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Electronics</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Telephone Work</p> <p>RAILROAD</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Locomotive Engineer</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Diesel Locomotive</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Air Brakes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Car Inspector</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Railroad Administration</p> <p>TEXTILE</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Textile Engineering</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Cotton, Rayon, Woolen Mfg.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Carding and Spinning</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Winding and Weaving</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Loom Fixing</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Throwing</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Finishing and Dyeing</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Textile Designing</p> |
|--|--|--|--|---|

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